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ARGOSY

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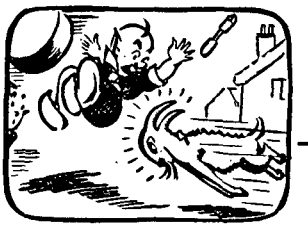

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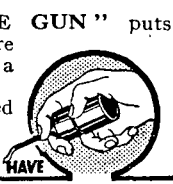

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. . . "I have secured another taker for my work since I saw you last. This time it is Radio Eireann, and they have appointed me as county correspondent for the news. Cash Sales for first year amounted to over £50."
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FEBRUARY, 1951

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MARCH, 1951

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Mrs. J. S. (Manchester Housewife).

. . . "You will be interested to hear that after further condensation I submitted 'I Was an Accident Statistic' to the 'Daily Herald,' and it was accepted for publication."
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ARGOSY

Contents for June, 1951

Vol. XII **No. 6**

		Page
Wind of Summer	**Michael Field**	**4**
The Barbers of Mendoza	**Laurence Kirk**	**5**
Lord of the Jungle	**Jim Kjelgaard**	**19**
The Black Arab	**Anthony West**	**25**
Eureka!		**30**
"A Posteriori" by permission of Chatto & Windus; "In Spite of Scruples" by courtesy of T. Werner Laurie; "Heard Melodies Are Sweet, But . . ." by permission of J. M. Dent & Sons		
Capra	**Sarban**	**33**
From "Ringstones" by permission of Peter Davies		
The Man Who Stood in the Way	**Dashiell Hammett**	**53**
Cautionary Tale	**C. S. Jarvis**	**60**
No Strings Attached	**Ray Bradbury**	**61**
Double Exposure	**Viscountess Rhondda**	**67**
By permission of "Time and Tide" and the author		
A Match for Lord Strafford		**68**
Scenario	**John Galsworthy**	**71**
From "Caravan" under the title "Acme" by permission of Mrs. Galsworthy		
Legend in Advance	**John Gloag**	**77**
From "Take One a Week" by courtesy of Chantry Publications		
Old Familiar Places		**80**
Suspicion	**Giuseppe Marotta**	**81**
Presenting—		**86**
"And You Went and Gardened" from "The White Horseman" by permission of Routledge and Kegan Paul; "Not Pleased" by permission of Skeffington and Son		
Adam and Eve and Pinch Me	**A. E. Coppard**	**89**
Post-Mortem Murder	**Sinclair Lewis**	**99**
Traveller's Tale	**William Bartram**	**117**
Summer's Music		**120**
"Block, block, block" by permission of the Proprietors of "Punch"		
A Rough Shoot (Last Part)	**Geoffrey Household**	**123**
Argosy Crossword		**160**

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Wind of Summer

O WIND, thou hast thy kingdom in the trees,
And all thy royalties
Sweep through the land today
It is mid-June
And thou, with all thine instruments in tune
Thine orchestra
Of heaving fields, and heavy, swinging fir,
Strikest a lay
That doth rehearse
Her ancient freedom to the universe.
All other sound in awe
Repeals its law ;
The bird is mute, the sea
Sucks up its waves, from rain
The burthened clouds refrain,
To listen to thee in thy leafery,
Thou unconfined
Lavish, large, soothing, refluent summer-wind.

MICHAËL FIELD

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THE BARBERS OF MENDOZA

With a great deal of shunting and blowing of whistles they were gone. All ten of them

by LAURENCE KIRK

IF it seems odd that there was only one Barber of Seville, it may seem odder still that there were ten in Mendoza which was a town very much smaller. For this Mendoza was not the handsome city of the Argentine, but one of the seven other lesser Mendozas which lie in the sunny lee of the *cordillera* in that same excitable continent. Anyway there were ten barbers. Their names were Luigi, Tullio, Grandi; Conrado, Carlo, Constantino; Zacchi, Crocchi, Stutti and Perugino; and each of these had two or more grown sons to help him in the family business.

As their names implied, these barbers were all of Italian origin. This is an important matter; for if any of them nicked a customer's chin the blood that flowed out was certain to be Spanish or as near as made no matter. Another important thing about them was their number. Few people there were rich enough to have a whole ticket in the grand *loteria*. But nearly everyone had a tenth of one. So every year on the first of January Luigi, who was the doyen of all the barbers, used to buy one ticket and sell a tenth of it to each of the other nine.

The reason for this multitude of barbers was a very simple one. It was not the fashion there for a man to shave himself. Those little electric lawn-mowers which are so popular in the northern half of the American continent were totally unknown there. The most ardent and industrious salesman had never sold a single safety razor in Mendoza. And even though there were a few cut-throat razors about in private hands, these were used exclusively for political argument and not for shaving.

Besides, the Mendozans were a talkative community, and each barber's shop was a kind of club where all the affairs of the town were discussed. Often when the lather had just been laid on some important chin, Luigi or Perugino or Tullio would have to wait with razor delicately poised for as much as half an hour, replenishing the lather at intervals, while the customer made a speech about the rights of man. The rights of women had not yet come to be discussed in Mendoza.

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And shaving of course was not the only thing that went on in the barbers' shops. There was hair-cutting as well. And after the hair-cutting—shampooing, singeing, frictioning, pomading and scenting. There was more scenting than soaping in Mendoza. And even that was not the end. There was shoe-shining as well on a dais that ran along the wall opposite the mirrors and the backs of the barbers' chairs. Boots and shoes in Mendoza were cleaned on the owner's feet or not at all, just as the chins had to be shaved in a barber's chair. Some of the more indolent of the males had them cleaned ten or twelve times a day. It was a habit just like lighting a cigarette.

In fact there were some customers who spent the whole day at the barber's, except for lunch and a little *vino*. They would begin with a shoe-shine while they were waiting for a chair. Then there would be the shave, hair-cut perhaps, pomading and scenting, much argument, and another shoe-shine. The walk across the road to the restaurant would then dirty the shoes, and at three they would be back for more argument and another shine. By that time they were ready to be shaved again. Beards grew quickly in the dusty glare of Mendoza.

With all this business going on it might be supposed that a barber's lot in Mendoza was a very happy one. But the truth is that they were a downtrodden and miserable section of the community. The trouble was that their charges were laid down by the Mayor and endorsed by the Governor. Politics in Mendoza were a mixture of feudalism, eye-wash, and quick grabbing ; and neither the Mayor nor the Governor felt inclined to pay one *centimo* more for a shave than he ever had.

Once a year the ten barbers went and petitioned the Governor with Luigi as their spokesman. It was not only a question of the rise in the cost of the scents and pomades nor of the increasing taxes they had to pay. Their main grievance was that they were not allowed to charge according to the work done. Their clients were not all distinguished *caballeros* like His Excellency. Some of them were *gauchos* or *vaqueros* who came in once a year from the surrounding estates with a growth that no razor or scissors could possibly cope with. One needed a machete as if one were cutting through sugar cane. And it took time, much much time, like a journey through the *Matto Grosso.*

Could they not at least charge according to the hours they had to spend, and be saved from the extremes of exhaustion and penury ?

This argument gave the Governor the very opportunity he wanted to appear as the protector of the poor. How, he asked, could he, a *caballero* and an important minister of the state, allow some poor *gaucho* to pay more for a shave or a hair-cut than he did himself ? The proposal was an outrageous one and the barbers

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should take more pride in their ancient and honourable profession.

So once a year Luigi and the other nine barbers came back empty-handed from the Governor's palace and went dejectedly on with their work. One year Perugino was so upset that he even tried to commit suicide ; but though an excellent barber he was no good at cutting throats.

Such was the situation one September morning when the sun was streaming down on the baked dusty streets of Mendoza. All the chairs were occupied in each of the barbers' shops, and while the lathering went on the little dark-skinned *mozos* were raising a brilliant shine on the shoes on the dais behind. There was much conversation, too ; for a very carefully rigged election was in progress.

At Luigi's the Mayor himself was in the centre chair. Luigi had already shaved the right hand side of his face, and was lathering the left hand side for the fourth or fifth time, while the Mayor made a speech about the glorious future which lay in front of Mendoza if the right candidate were elected. The razor was poised in Luigi's hand like a conductor's baton ready to unleash the final movement the instant the Mayor shut his mouth for a second.

At this moment there was an interruption and a disturbance. It began with a curious kind of squealing outside. Then, to his horror, Luigi saw that his wife and all his younger children were flooding into the shop. This was an outrage ; for no woman ever came near any of the barbers' shops. However, Angelina was an orderly well-behaved wife and Luigi knew at once that something serious must be wrong. My *bambino*, he thought ! The little one ! Something has happened to my little one. And he hastily began to count to see that they were all there.

Meanwhile the whole family were embracing him regardless of the open razor and the now silent and scowling Mayor.

" *Telegramma*, papa ! " they squealed. " *Telegramma !* "

Luigi managed to shut the razor and put it in a place of safety. Then as the lather dried on the Mayor's unfinished face he at last succeeded in reading the telegram which Angelina was holding out in front of him.

When he had finished he threw his arms high above his head.

" *Santa Maria !* " he exclaimed. " *Non è possibile !* "

Everyone in the shop now was clustered round the telegram. Clients with half-shone shoes, clients with white sheets on their shoulders and half-cut hair : *mozos*, assistants, and all Luigi's progeny. Only the Mayor remained aloof, waiting stonily for his shave to be finished.

" But the *annual loteria* ! " people were saying in amazement.

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"And the *first* prize! But that is a fortune. A fortune of five million pesos. How comes it, Luigi, that you had a whole ticket in the grand *loteria*?"

"Who says I had a whole ticket?" Luigi answered. "I have but the tenth of a ticket. But even the tenth of a ticket! Five hundred thousand pesos! Oh, *mama mia*, what can I not do with that?"

"You must be prudent, Luigi!" someone said. Then in the uproar another went on. "But the other tenths of the ticket? Who has the other tenths?"

"Why, my good friends Carlo and Conrado and Perugino, and all the other barbers of Mendoza."

"All the barbers of Mendoza!!"

"Why yes, we are rich men now. *Caballeros. Señores.*"

There was now a moment of uneasy silence. It was fine that the good Luigi should get a prize. But if all the barbers of Mendoza had prizes, didn't that open rather alarming possibilities? Just as if, for instance, the whole water supply had been suddenly cut off!

The Mayor realised this like the others and tried to handle the situation tactfully.

"Come, come, Luigi," he said. "No one is better pleased than I that fortune has smiled on you. If you will just finish my shaving now, we can then take a quiet glass of *vino* to celebrate this happy day."

Luigi turned on him passionately.

"Finish your shaving, *señor*! Your shaving would have been finished an hour ago but for your stupid pompous chattering. Now it will never be finished. Not by me, Luigi. Never shall I touch all your chins again. Come, Angelina! *Bambini!* This is a great day! We must meet Constantino and Carlo and all the others and make merry."

A moment later the Mayor was left alone in the shop, staring disconsolately in the mirror at the drying lather on his half-shaved face. All the rest of the customers had followed Luigi and the *bambini* out into the sun-baked street. And this was happening all over Mendoza just as if ten Pied Pipers had suddenly come to town. In almost every other street there was an excited barber hurrying towards the market place; and behind him came a stream of distracted clients. Some of them still had white sheets on their shoulders: some had one clean shoe and one dirty: some half a beard and some half a hair-cut or the soapsuds still on their heads.

They followed helplessly to the market place and saw the barbers fall on each other's necks and kiss each other. They saw them go arm in arm into the restaurant and order the *vino*. Bottles and

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bottles and bottles of it. Then as the singing started they drifted away and tried to tidy themselves up. They realised that a tornado had struck Mendoza.

The main difference between the Mayor and the Governor was that the Governor knew that he was a rogue, and as a result was capable of sensible and even kindly actions. The Mayor, on the other hand, thought that he was not only a great politician but a saint as well, and consequently never did any but the stupidest things. The Governor, Don Felipe, was a widower, with one daughter, several lady friends, and a taste for all the good things of life including a good laugh.

Don Felipe had a very good laugh that day over the barbers. First of all he had got his own shave in good and early before the telegram arrived. Albertino, who was Luigi's eldest son, used to come up to the palace and shave him every morning while he was still in his dressing gown. Second, he had witnessed the scene in the town at midday with all the barbers streaming towards the market place. Finally Don José, the Mayor, had come panting up to the palace in the heat of the afternoon, in a complete state of panic, and tried to get him to sign a proclamation ordering a state of siege in Mendoza.

Don Felipe had given him a glass of wine to calm him down, pointed out that the barbers would all go home quietly to sleep it off when they had had enough to drink; but finally, to appease him, had allowed him to mobilise the *bomberos* in case the barbers tried to burn the town down. It was all highly diverting, but what Don Felipe enjoyed best of all was the sight of the two large patches of plaster on Don José's left cheek. Don José had obviously finished his shave himself.

Altogether Don Felipe was in high spirits when he sat down alone to dinner with his daughter Carnación.

" *Que susto !* " he began as he attacked an avocado pear. " What a to-do ! What a panic ! My dear, if you had only seen the plaster on Don José's face ! "

Carnación turned her large brown eyes towards him.

" Yes, papa. It is a pity that I did not see Don José. All the same I do not think that you should crow too early yourself."

" Why not, child ? "

" Well, there is your own shave tomorrow morning. And the next day. And the next."

" But Albertino will come up as usual. I am the Governor. He would never dare ! "

" I am afraid that Albertino will not be there tomorrow, papa."

" But how not ? This is monstrous ! "

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" Albertino regrets infinitely, papa. But he feels that he must look after his poor father Luigi and see that he does not make too much a mule of himself. They are going all of them to Pintado del Mar tomorrow. To the gambling. They have ordered a special train."

" A special train ! All of them ? "

" Every barber in Mendoza, papa."

Don Felipe poured himself a large glass of red wine and drank it down quickly. Then another disturbing thought occurred to him.

" How comes it, Carnación, that you know as much as this ? "

" Albertino came up himself specially to tell me."

" Albertino ! But have I not forbidden you absolutely ever to speak to that young man again ? "

" Yes, papa."

" And you have disobeyed me ? "

" Yes, papa."

" Am I then to shut you up in your room for your wickedness ? "

" Just as you please, papa. But I shall still love Albertino."

" Love ! Love ! " Don Felipe thundered, then he felt his chin with his hand. " Well, I suppose at the worst I could grow a beard."

Carnación studied him thoughtfully.

" Yes, papa, you could do that. But I do not think that either Carmen or Pilar would like it."

" Silence ! " Don Felipe thundered again. " I will not have my morals discussed at the dinner table."

The next course was eaten in a stony silence. It was not till the dessert was on the table that Don Felipe got up and studied his face carefully in the oval Spanish mirror at the side of the room.

Carnación then went on gravely.

" I have a suggestion to make, papa."

" Go on, my child."

" There is, of course, plenty of plaster in the house; but I do not think that Carmen or Pilar would like plaster any more than a beard."

" Child, I have already told you . . . ! "

" Yes, papa. But what I was going to suggest was that I should shave you myself in the morning."

" You, child ! Do you not understand that shaving is an art ? A great art ! And all our artists are going to Pintado del Mar ! In a special train ! For the gambling ! Oh, that civic sense in Mendoza should have sunk so low ! "

" I know all that, papa. But I have learned to shave very well. Albertino taught me."

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" Albertino ! "

" Yes, papa."

" But on whom ? One cannot shave without a face and a beard."

" Why, on Albertino himself, papa. He says it was very soothing."

Don Felipe now flung his arms to heaven.

" Oh *Santa Maria ! Santa Barbara ! Santa Fe !* " he groaned. " I forbid my daughter to speak to a man, and she goes and shaves him ! Is there no modesty left in Mendoza ? "

Carnación carefully selected a large bunch of ripe juicy grapes from the bowl in the middle of the table ; and then stood up.

" Shall I go to my room now, papa ? "

" Yes, child." Don Felipe answered wearily. " Go to your room, and pray, pray, pray that you may become a little more dutiful."

Carnación came forward and kissed him tenderly on the forehead.

" I shall pray," she said sweetly. " Good night, dear papa. *A buen descansar.*" Then she walked gracefully out of the room with the grapes in her hand.

Don Felipe poured himself out another glass of wine, and then stood for a long time looking thoughtfully at his face in the mirror.

Don Felipe did not sleep very well in spite of his daughter's good wishes. The barbers had succeeded in pushing their families and womenfolk off home about seven o'clock, and they then settled down to a great many more bottles of *vino*. About eleven, just to show that there was no ill feeling, they had the happy idea of serenading the Mayor, the Chief of Police, and the Governor. It was after midnight when they had finished with Don Felipe. He did think of having the hoses turned on to them ; but they sang two of his favourite songs and sang them very well indeed in spite of their drunkenness. So he refrained.

Even then sleep did not come to Don Felipe. He lay in bed worrying about Carnación. Was he bringing her up in the proper way ? Was he too lenient ? What more could he do ? The only answer he could think of was that he might reform his own private life a little, and he was reluctantly deciding to do this when he fell asleep.

But then, soon after six, there was a great commotion in the railway station which was down the hill in front of the palace. This was the special train preparing itself, and it did it with a great deal of shunting and blowing of whistles. All sorts of strange vehicles began to arrive as Don Felipe stood at the window ; and out of them tumbled the barbers and their numerous progeny. Some of them were still too drunk to stand, but they were still

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sober enough to make plenty of noise. And the noise continued till eight o'clock when the train with a piercing shriek on the whistle started off for Pintado del Mar.

It was at this moment that Don Felipe raised his hand and felt the stubble on his chin. Well, I am a man of great resource, he thought, much superior to Don José. I shall show them that I at least can shave myself. He then started hunting for a razor. Having found that, he paused a moment wondering what else it was that he required. Why, something to make the lather obviously, and a strop. Nobody could think of shaving without a strop. He was overjoyed when he found a strop amongst his winter underclothes. He put it on a hook quite correctly and proceeded to move the razor up and down on it with a neat movement of the wrist. At the third downward movement he cut the strop completely in two, and this so unnerved him that he went to the door and called plaintively for his daughter.

Carnación seemed to have been expecting this, for she answered at once.

" All right, papa. I'm coming. I have everything ready."

A moment later she came in pushing the little trolley that Albertino used. On it were all the accessories, razors, hot water, soap, strop, towels, scent; and for a moment Don Felipe's spirits rose.

They sank again as she put the sheet round his shoulders and he got into the chair like a man with bad toothache sacrificing his future to a dentist who had never qualified. There was a brief reprieve as Carnación mixed the lather and spread it on his face, but that was followed by a moment of agony as he looked to see how she held the razor.

Carnación then took off two neat slices of beard and stood back to admire her handiwork.

" You know, papa," she said sweetly. " If I had not been such a good and dutiful daughter, I might have made a bargain before I started this."

Don Felipe looked at her uneasily.

" A bargain, child ! What kind of a bargain ? "

" Why, papa, that if your head was still on your shoulders when I had finished, then I should marry whoever I wished."

Don Felipe grinned. His confidence was returning.

" I, too, might have made a bargain, child. That if you cut me —but even the nickest of nicks—then you should marry whoever I chose for you."

Carnación laughed gaily and took off three more neat slices of beard.

" You must admit, papa," she went on as she wiped the razor, " that Albertino has taught me well."

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" The young rascal knows his job, such as it is."

" You think that it is purely because of Albertino's teaching that I shave so well ? "

" What else could it be, child ? "

" Could it not be, papa, that my grandfather Pedro was the best barber in Santiago del Sol ? "

Carnación kept the razor well away from her father's face until the explosion subsided. The explosion came instantaneously.

" Oh, so you've found that out, too, you vixen ! "

" Yes, papa."

" But how, when I've kept it quiet all these years . . . ? "

" Tia Catalina told me, papa."

" Tia Catalina ! Oh women, women, women ! "

Don Felipe subsided heavily in the chair and Carnación took the opportunity to remove the remaining slices of beard. It was not till she had taken the hot towel from his face and was rubbing in the cooling cream that he went on very gently.

" You must not think that I am ashamed of my father, child. It is simply a matter of politics. Among the men I mix with—and compete with—there is a strange idea that the grandees of Spain are better fathers than the barbers of Santiago del Sol. You understand that I have never had that illusion myself."

" I understand, papa." Carnación deftly removed the white sheet from her father's shoulders. "And I am sure that Albertino's children will understand it, too, when they are great men like you."

Don Felipe went and gazed at his smooth clean comfortable face in the glass.

" Remarkable ! " he murmured. " Really remarkable ! " Then he turned round. " You are my only daughter, Carnación. Must I really give you to this rascally Italian ? "

" I think it is best, papa. He is a good man, and a clean man, and a sensible man. But there is yet another matter that I wanted to discuss with you."

" What is it, child ? "

Carnación sat down and looked thoughtfully out of the window.

" It is not only that we must have barbers in Mendoza. We cannot live without barbers."

" I know that. There will be riots. But what else ? "

" I am worried about these poor good men and their families. Albertino is all right. His head is where it ought to be. But the rest of them ! They will just lose their good money, and ruin their health, and make mules of themselves."

Don Felipe came and put his hand affectionately on Carnación's shoulder.

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"I know, my child, I know. But what can I do? Even a Governor cannot save the foolish from their folly."

Carnación looked up at him with her big brown eyes.

"But I think he could, papa. And earn much credit, too! . . . Of course it is too early yet. But in a week perhaps—when the time is ripe . . ."

Don Felipe sat down beside his daughter. He slapped his knee enthusiastically several times as she unfolded her little plan.

Don Felipe had his own methods for finding out what was happening in Pintado del Mar and it was not till ten days later that he sent Carnación off, suitably duenna-ed, to stay with Tia Catalina there. Tia Catalina was astounded when she received Don Felipe's letter telling her that Albertino was not only to be admitted to the house but was to be allowed to see Carnación alone. Such a thing had never happened in her house before and she was all of a flutter.

There is no point in lingering over the sweet things that Carnación and Albertino said to each other when they were left alone in a corner of the sunny *patio*. Such things have been said before in similar circumstances and no doubt will be said again. But the moment came when Carnación remembered that she had an important mission to perform.

"You look so worried, dear Albertino," she began. "Is that all the reward there is when one's father wins the first prize in the grand *loteria*?"

"That seems to be it," Albertino agreed dolefully.

"Then they are losing all their money, the poor barbers?"

"Now they are. And if only they had lost from the start there might have been some hope. But at the beginning, dear Carnación, they won. Quite fabulously they won. Three nights running the banks were broken and there was not enough money in the whole of Pintado del Mar to pay the lucky winning barbers."

Carnación put her head on one side.

"And they went out shopping, too, no doubt."

"Shopping! Oh my beloved, the dresses from Paris! The quite quite unsuitable dresses! The pearls and diamonds and sapphires! And the furs! Only chinchilla was good enough. And there they sit, sweltering in their furs, those poor simple women, while their stupid husbands pour brandy down their throats. Oh dear Carnación, I am ashamed to belong to such a set of mules."

"And now they are losing their money, Albertino?"

"Yes, losing it, and faster than they ever won it. The jewels that came out of the jewellers are going back to the pawnbrokers. And the furs, too. But that does not stop them. They have won,

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you see. They know that it is possible to win. Nothing will stop them now till they have lost their last centimo."

Carnación tilted her head to the other side.

" Is it true that some of them have sold their barbers' shops ? "

" Too true, my dearest. Four of them have done it and the rest are thinking of it. What, they say, do rich *caballeros* like them need with barbers' shops ? "

" And your father Luigi ? "

" So far I have stopped him. So far."

Carnación paused three seconds.

" Why did Perugino not come with you all to Pintado del Mar ? "

" The poor Perugino ! " Albertino answered lightly. " He never had the stomach for any high living."

" You think that that is the only reason ? "

" Why, yes, what else ? "

" To whom did the four barbers sell their shops ? "

" I do not know. I do not think they know. To anyone who would buy them, I suppose."

" To Perugino, for instance ? "

" Carnación, you don't mean ! ! ! "

" It would be a good bit of business for Perugino after all. To buy up all the shops while the owners are throwing their money away, and then when they are penniless to hire them back at a very small wage. It would be good business indeed."

" But Perugino would not dare. He must know that he would have his throat cut."

" Greed does strange things to men, Albertino. And he would at least have my father's support. You see, he says that it was just for the honour of shaving His Excellency that he stayed behind."

" The dirty favour-currying scoundrel ! Does His Excellency know what is going on ? "

" His Excellency does not say all he knows, Albertino. And neither do I. But there have been troubles in Mendoza. The poor frightened Mayor is besieged in his house. There have even been demonstrations in front of the palace, swarthy unshaven men demanding, not bread, but barbers. His Excellency cannot let it continue. To save the town from violence he will import barbers from Santiago, even Buenos Aires, wherever he can get them. If your friends do not all return tomorrow, Albertino, I fear that it may be too late."

Albertino had jumped violently to his feet.

" Carnación, I love you, I shall always love you," he cried. " But there is now no time to lose. I go. I run. I fly."

Albertino in his minor masculine way was nearly as good a

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tactician as Carnación herself. The gambling had already started when he reached the casino, and at each table there was a barber or two broodily watching as the ball dropped into the wrong slot and the croupier raked their stakes away. If they were enjoying themselves there was no sign of it on any of their faces.

Their wives meanwhile sat in corners in their unsuitable Paris gowns. For them the short bright day was already over. Most of the pearls and the diamonds were already back in the pawnshops, and there was little consolation even for those who still had their fur coats. Neither jewels nor furs could compensate for the behaviour of their once good and industrious husbands. It was not only a question of the drinking and the gambling. What chilled them most were the looks those same husbands gave to the bold painted young women of whom there seemed to be an inexhaustible supply in Pintado del Mar.

It was to the wives that Albertino addressed himself. He went first to Angelina, his own mother, who was sitting yawning on a vast sofa and longing for her rocking chair. After he had whispered to her for a moment or two, Angelina stood up and strode forcefully forward as the wife of Constantino hobbled across the room on her high heels. More whispering there, then they beckoned to Giovanna, the stout wife of Carlo, who was bursting out of some bright blue silk. Thus the two became three, the three four, and so on until finally the nine embattled wives bore down on the gaming tables and plucked their husbands from them.

There was more whispering then as the barbers and their wives clustered in a solid mass at the end of the great salon. Arms were thrown up in anger. Voices were raised. The scoundrel! The covetous son of Judas! The infamy! Finally the whole angry herd stampeded from the casino and out into the street.

Fortunately the pawnbrokers stay open all night in Pintado del Mar. The remaining jewels and fur coats were converted into cash, the hotel bills—the vast exorbitant hotel bills—were paid; and at six o'clock they all crammed into the early train for Mendoza. No special train this time. They didn't even travel first class.

Albertino was wishing that the journey were long enough to give them time to cool off. It would be such a bad start for their return to Mendoza if they began by murdering the dyspeptic Perugino. And that seemed to be what they were intent on doing. Luigi and Albertino both argued as hard as they could; but the journey was only two hours long, and the train had hardly stopped at Mendoza when they burst out of the carriages and rushed towards Perugino's house.

There is no knowing what might have happened; but at Perugino's house the Chief of Police was waiting for them with

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twenty of his best *carabineros* behind him. He asked rather coldly what they wanted and they replied sheepishly that they didn't know. He then informed them that the Governor was waiting for them—and had in fact been waiting for ten days or more. The nine barbers then looked at each other miserably, packed their wives and children off home, and went humbly up to the palace.

Meanwhile everything had been very carefully timed at the palace. Carnación was looking through the keyhole and Perugino had just finished shaving Don Felipe when the barbers came cap in hand into the great room.

Don Felipe took his time about noticing them.

"Well, you are back!" he said at last. "I trust that you have all enjoyed yourselves at Pintado del Mar."

"We are glad to be back, Excellency," Luigi said humbly.

"That is good. But why, may I ask, did you all proceed so violently from the train to the good Perugino's house? Did you not know that he would be shaving me here?"

"No, Excellency, we didn't."

"Had you heard by chance that it was Perugino who had been buying up your businesses?"

"Well, Excellency . . ."

Don Felipe was enjoying himself immensely. He now put on his most official manner.

"Gentlemen, you do the good Perugino a grave injustice. The only reason he stayed behind was that he thinks more highly of his stomach than to pour wine and brandy into it continuously. That and perhaps some small regard for the comfort and appearance of his Governor!"

"We are sorry, Excellency. Indeed we are sorry . . . But our businesses? Who owns our businesses now?"

"It is I who bought them," Don Felipe answered smoothly. I bought them so that you would have something to come back to when you had spent all your money and exhausted your folly."

"Oh, Excellency, you are too good to us."

"That has always been my way, I fear. But I trust that you will now show your gratitude. There is much work to do. When every chin in Mendoza is shaved, every hair is cut, every shoe is shined, then and not till then shall I return your businesses to you. Perhaps even for the little that I paid for them!"

"Oh, Excellency! We go. We start work this very instant."

This was the moment that Don Felipe (and Carnación) had been waiting for.

"Work now!" he raised his voice. "Have you so lost all interest in the affairs of Mendoza that you do not know a *fiesta* has been declared from midday today until midday tomorrow?"

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"A *fiesta*, Excellency! . . . But what saint . . . ?"

"Saint! This has nothing to do with saints, thank God! The *fiesta* is to celebrate the betrothal of my daughter Carnación to Albertino, the eldest son of our good Luigi here."

The uproar went on for five good minutes. Luigi was in tears. Constantino was in tears. Even Don Felipe himself was almost in tears. But at last he managed to push them towards the door.

"Now, gentlemen," he ended. "You must behave yourselves. It is at six o'clock tonight that the dancing and feasting begins in the market place. Till then, farewell. But bring your mandolins. You sing indeed most pleasantly."

Carnación came out from behind the door when the last of them had gone. After she had kissed him Don Felipe pinched her left ear gently with his fingers.

"You are a bad, clever, wicked girl, Carnación," he said. "But if God is just, I think that that worthless Albertino is going to love you even more than I do."

* * *

TALKING POINT

There are three sides to every question; your side, his side, and to hell with it.
Author Unknown

Every argument between two people is likely to sink or rise to the level of a dog-fight.
A. A. Milne

When you convert someone to an idea . . . you lose your faith in it.
Oscar Wilde

"My husband never argues with me. He just says: 'I have spoken.'"
Woman at Police Court

There is no arguing with him, for if his pistol misses fire, he knocks you down with the butt-end of it.
Oliver Goldsmith (of Dr. Johnson)

Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. Answer a fool according to his folly lest he be wise in his own conceit.
Proverbs

A man can't argue with the woman he loves.
Author Unknown

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LORD OF THE JUNGLE

When fear is your constant companion and a machete your dearest friend, a man with a rifle is more than a hero

by JIM KJELGAARD

THE approaching jungle night was, in itself, a threat. As it deepened, an eerie silence enveloped the thatched village. People were silent. Tethered cattle stood quietly. Roosting chickens did not stir and wise goats made no noise. Thus it had been for countless centuries and thus it would continue to be. The brown-skinned inhabitants of the village knew the jungle. They had trodden its dim paths, forded its sulky rivers, borne its steaming heat and were intimately acquainted with its deer, tapir, crocodiles, screaming green parrots and countless other creatures.

That was the daytime jungle they could see, feel and hear, but at night everything became different. When darkness came, the jungle was alive with strange and horrible things which no man had ever seen and no man could describe. They were shadows that had no substance and one was unaware of them until they struck and killed. Then, with morning, they changed themselves back into the shape of familiar things. Because it was a time of the unknown, night had to be a time of fear.

Except, Pepe Garcia reflected, to the man who owned a rifle. As the night closed in, Pepe reached out to fondle his rifle and make sure that it was close beside him. As long as it was, he was king.

That was only just, for the rifle had cost him dearly. With eleven others from his village, Pepe had gone to help chop a right of way for the new road. They used machetes, the indispensable long knife of all jungle dwellers, and they had worked hard. Unlike the rest, Pepe had avoided the fleshpots. He saved every peso he didn't have to spend for immediate living expenses. With his savings, and after some haggling, he had bought his muzzle-loading rifle, a supply of powder, lead, and a mould in which he could fashion bullets for his rifle.

Eighty pesos it had cost him. But it was worth while. Though the jungle at night was fear itself, no man with a rifle had to fear. The others, who had only machetes with which to guard themselves from the terrors that came in the darkness, were willing to pay well for protection. Pepe went peacefully to sleep.

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He did not know what awakened him, only that something was about. He listened intently, but there was no change in the jungle's monotonous night sounds. Still, something was not as it should be.

Then he heard it. At the far end of the village, near Juan Aria's hut, a goat bleated uneasily. Silence followed. The goat bleated again, louder and more fearful. There was a pattering rush of small hoofs, a frightened bleat cut short, again silence.

Pepe, who did not need to people the night with fantastic creatures because he owned a rifle, interpreted correctly what he had heard. A *tigre*, a jaguar, had come in the night, leaped the thorn fence with which the village was surrounded, and made off with one of Juan Aria's goats.

Pepe went peacefully back to sleep. With morning, certainly, Juan Aria would come to him.

He did not awaken until the sun was up. Then he emerged from his hut, breakfasted on a *papava* he had gathered the day before, and awaited his expected visitor. They must come to him; it ill befitted a man with a rifle to seek out anyone at all.

Presently Pepe saw two men, Juan Aria and his brother, coming up one of the paths that wound through the village. Others stared curiously, but nobody else came because their flocks had not been raided. They had no wish to pay, or to help pay, a hunter.

Pepe waited until the two were near, then said, "*Buenos días.*"

"*Buenos días,*" they replied.

They sat down in the sun, looking at nothing in particular, not afraid any more because the day was never a time of fear. By daylight, only now and again did a *tigre* come to raid a flock of goats, or kill a *burro* or a cow.

After a suitable lapse of time, Juan Aria said, "I brought my goats into the village last night, thinking they would be safe."

"And were they not?"

"They were not. Something came and killed one, a fine white and black nanny, my favourite. When the thing left, the goat went too. Never again shall I see her alive."

"What killed your goat?" Pepe inquired.

"A devil, but this morning I saw only the tracks of a *tigre.*"

"Did you hear it come?"

"I heard it."

"Then why did you not defend your flock?"

Juan Aria gestured with eloquent hands. "To attack a devil, or a *tigre*, with nothing but a machete would be madness."

"That is true," Pepe agreed. "Let us hope that the next time it is hungry, this devil, or *tigre*, will not come back for another goat."

"But it will!"

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Pepe relaxed, for Juan Aria's admission greatly improved Pepe's bargaining position. And it was true that, having had a taste of easy game, the *tigre* would come again. Only death would end his forays, and since he knew where to find Juan Aria's goats, he would continue to attack them.

Pepe said, " That is bad, for a man may lose many goats to a *tigre*."

" Unless a hunter kills him," Juan Aria said.

" Unless a hunter kills him," Pepe agreed.

" That is why I have come to you, Pepe." Juan Aria said. A troubled frown overspread his face. " I hope you will follow and kill this *tigre*, for you are the only man who can do so."

" It would give me much pleasure to kill him, but I cannot work for nothing."

" Nor do I expect you to. Even a *tigre* will not eat an entire goat, and you are sure to find what is left of my favourite nanny. Whatever the *tigre* has not eaten, you may have for your pay."

Pepe bristled. " You are saying that I should put myself and my rifle to work for carrion left by a *tigre* ? "

" No, no ! " Juan Aria protested. " In addition I will give you one live goat ! "

" Three goats."

" I am a poor man ! " the other wailed. " You would ruin me ! "

" No man with twenty-nine goats is poor, though he may be if a *tigre* raids his flock a sufficient number of times," Pepe said.

" I will give you one goat and two kids."

" Two goats and one kid."

" You drive a hard bargain," Juan Aria said, " but I cannot deny you now. Kill the *tigre*."

Affecting an air of nonchalance, as befitted the owner of a fire-arm, Pepe took his rifle from the fine blanket upon which it lay when he was not carrying it. He looked to his powder horn and bullet pouch, strapped his machete on, and sauntered towards Juan Aria's hut. A half-dozen worshipful children followed.

" Begone ! " Pepe ordered.

They fell behind, but continued to follow until Pepe came to that place where Juan Aria's flock had passed the night. He glanced at the dust, and saw the *tigre's* great paw marks imprinted there. It was a huge cat, lame in the right front paw. A thorn might have penetrated the paw, or it might have been injured in battle with another *tigre*.

Expertly, Pepe located the place where it had gone back over the thorn fence. Though the *tigre* had carried the sixty-pound goat

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in its jaws, only a couple of thorns were disturbed at the place where it had leaped.

Though he did not look around, Pepe was aware of the villagers watching him and he knew that their glances would be very respectful. Most of the men went into the jungle from time to time to work with their machetes, but none would work where *tigres* were known to be. Not one would dare take a *tigre's* trail. Only Pepe dared, and, because he did, he must be revered.

Still affecting nonchalance, Pepe sauntered through the gate. Behind him, he heard the village's collective sigh of mingled relief and admiration. A raiding *tigre* was a very real and terrible threat, and goats and cattle were not easily come by. The man with a rifle, the man able to protect them, must necessarily be a hero.

Once in the jungle, and out of the villagers' sight, Pepe underwent a transformation. He shed his air of indifference and became as alert as the little doe that showed him only her white tail. A rifle might be a symbol of power, but unless a man was also a hunter, a rifle did him no good. Impressing the villagers was one thing; hunting a *tigre* was quite another.

Pepe knew the great cats were dappled death incarnate. They could move with incredible swiftness and were strong enough to kill an ox. They feared nothing.

Jungle-born, Pepe slipped along as softly as a jungle shadow. His machete slipped a little, and he shifted it to a place where his legs would not be bumped. From time to time he glanced at the ground before him.

To trained eyes, there was a distinct trail. It consisted of an occasional drop of blood from the dead goat, a bent or broken plant, a few hairs where the *tigre* had squeezed between trees, paw prints in soft places. Within the first quarter mile Pepe knew many things about this *tigre.*

He was not an ordinary beast, or he would have gone only far enough from the village so his nostrils could not be assailed by its unwelcome scents and eaten what he wanted there, then covered the remainder of the goat with sticks and leaves. He was not old, for his was not the lagging gait of an old cat, and the ease with which he had leaped the thorn fence with a goat in his jaws was evidence of his strength.

Pepe stopped to look to the loading and priming of his rifle. There seemed to be nothing amiss, and there had better not be. When he saw the *tigre* he must shoot straight and true. Warned by some super jungle sense, Pepe slowed his pace. A moment later he found his game.

He came upon it suddenly in a grove of scattered palms.

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Because he had not expected it there, Pepe did not see it until he was nearer than safety allowed.

The *tigre* crouched at the base of a palm whose fronds waved at least fifty feet above the roots. Both its front paws were on what remained of the dead goat. It did not snarl or grimace, or even twitch its tail. But there was a lethal quality about the great cat and an extreme tension. The *tigre* was bursting with raw anger that seemed to swell and grow.

Pepe stopped in his tracks and cold fear kissed his spine. But he did not give way to fear. With deliberate, studied slowness he brought the rifle to his shoulder and took aim. He had only one bullet and there would be no time to reload, but even a *tigre* could not withstand the smash of that enormous leaden ball right between the eyes. Pepe steadied the rifle.

His finger tightened slowly on the trigger, for he must not let nervousness spoil his aim. When the hammer fell Pepe's brain and body became momentarily numb.

There was no satisfying roar and no puff of black powder smoke wafting away from the muzzle. Instead there was only a sudden hiss, as though cold water had spilled on a hot stone, and the metallic click of the falling hammer. Pepe himself had loaded the rifle, but he could not have done so, correctly. Only the powder in the priming pan flashed.

It was the spark needed to explode the anger in the *tigre's* lithe and deadly body. He emitted a coughing snarl and launched his charge. Lord of the jungle, he would crush this puny man who dared interfere with him.

Pepe jerked back to reality, but he took time to think of his rifle, leaning it lovingly against a tree and in the same motion jerking his machete from its sheath.

It was now a hopeless fight, to be decided in the *tigre's* favour, because not within the memory of the village's oldest inhabitant had any man ever killed a *tigre* with a machete. But it was as well to fight hopelessly as to turn and run, for if he did that he would surely be killed. No *tigre* that attacked anything was ever known to turn aside.

Machete in hand, Pepe studied the onrushing cat. He had read the tracks correctly, for from pad to joint the *tigre's* right front foot was swollen to almost twice the size of the other. It must have stepped on a poisonous thorn or been bitten by a snake.

Even with such a handicap, a *tigre* was more than a match for a man armed only with a machete—but Pepe watched the right front paw carefully. If he had any advantage, it lay there. Then the *tigre*, a terrible, pitiless engine of destruction, flung himself at Pepe. Pepe had known from the first that the *tigre's* initial

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strike would be exactly this one, and he was ready for it. He swerved, bending his body outward as the great cat brushed past him. With all the strength in his powerful right arm, he swung the machete. He stopped his downward stroke just short of the *tigre's* silken back, for he knew suddenly that there was just one way to end this fight.

The *tigre* whirled, and hot spittle from his mouth splashed on the back of Pepe's left hand. Holding the machete before him, like a sword, he took a swift backward step. The *tigre* sprang, launching himself from the ground as though his rear legs were made of powerful steel springs, and coming straight up. His flailing left paw flashed at Pepe. It hooked in his shirt, ripping it away from the arm as though it were paper, and burning talons sank into the flesh. Red blood welled out and bubbled down the arm.

He did not try again to slash with the machete, but thrust, as he would have thrust with a knife or sword. The machete's point met the *tigre's* throat, and Pepe put all his strength and weight behind it. The blade explored its way into living flesh, and the *tigre* gasped. Blood bubbled over the machete.

With a convulsive effort, the *tigre* pulled himself away. But blood was rushing from his throat now and he shook his head, then stumbled and fell. He pulled himself erect, looked with glazing eyes at Pepe and dragged himself towards him. There was a throttled snarl. The *tigre* slumped to the ground. The tip of his tail twitched and was still.

Pepe stared, scarcely seeing the blood that flowed from his lacerated arm. He had done the impossible, he had killed a *tigre* with a machete. Pepe brushed a hand across his eyes and took a trembling forward step.

He picked up his rifle and looked again to the priming. There seemed to be nothing wrong. Re-priming, Pepe clasped the rifle with his elbow and seized the machete's hilt. Bracing one foot against the *tigre's* head, he drew the machete out.

Then he held his rifle so close to the machete wound that the muzzle caressed silken fur. He pulled the trigger. The wound gaped wider and smoke-blackened fur fringed it. All traces of the machete wound were obliterated. Pepe knew a second's anguished regret, then steeled himself, for this was the way it must be.

Everybody had a machete. In his village, the man who owned a rifle must remain supreme.

* * *

SOFT CURRENCY

Economics is the science of making money in the abstract.

CECIL HUNT

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THE BLACK ARAB

What attached me most to Mrs. Carstairs was that she had once — for twelve whole hours — been engaged to a horse

by ANTHONY WEST

MRS. CARSTAIRS, a widow in her middle thirties, lived at the other end of the straggling English village where I had my farm. I first met her when I decided to sell my scrub Shorthorns and go in for pedigreed Guernseys. She raised registered pedigreed Guernseys, so it seemed natural to apply to her for advice on what to look for and where to go to get it. She had a missionary spirit about the breed and was as delighted to see a local Shorthorn man changing over to Guernseys as a hell-fire revivalist would be to see a prominent local Roman Catholic sobbing and sighing on the sinners' bench. She took endless trouble, marking up auction catalogues for me, telling me about friends of hers who had promising young stock for sale, and several times escorting me to breed sales to see that I bought the right animals and didn't pay too much for them.

When I'd finished buying, she went on taking an interest in the herd she'd built, so we used to see each other quite often. I had the larger farm and the greater number of cattle (though they were not so good in quality as hers), so it generally happened that she had the free time for a stroll through the village to look in on me. When she came, I would drop whatever I was doing and we would spend half an hour or so looking at the new calves and the yearlings, gossiping about other breeders, or talking over the breed lines represented in my stock. Mrs. Carstairs had bred several champions, bulls and cows, and I learned a lot from her.

But if I was always glad to see Mrs. Carstairs, the village was not so happy about her calls on me. She believed that bulls needed exercise, and if she happened to be going for a walk, she generally took a bull with her. She was one of those slight Englishwomen, with good features and a look of radiant health, and aesthetically there was a pleasantly mythological aspect to her progress through the village.

The sight of the slim washed-gold blonde, in her neat tweed suit, leading a large honey-coloured bull along by a short chain attached to its nose ring put one in mind of the stories about virgins

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and unicorns. The villagers, however, knew that Clorinda's Champion of Hatch Hall weighed something in the neighbourhood of half a ton, and it was a sight they preferred to view from the upper windows of their cottages.

The village street used to clear as if by magic when the word spread that Mrs. Carstairs was on her way. I sometimes used to wonder what telepathic factor gave them advance warning, and speculated on the possibility of some bucolic survival of the sharper sensitivity to danger and menace said to be found in primitive man.

Actually, as I learned one morning when I happened to be in the village post office just at the moment Mrs. Carstairs set out for my place, it was a mechanism typical of the British way of life that was involved. When Mrs. Carstairs left her farmyard gate with her massive escort, her manservant used to slip into the house and telephone to the village post office and telephone exchange, halfway down the village street. The switchboard operator would take the call and then spread the message by an older method—standing on her doorstep and shouting to everyone in sight, "She'm coming!" The cry would be taken up from garden to garden, and the street would clear.

Mrs. Carstairs never knew about these calls. The postmistress reckoned them as a public service and never charged them up against Mrs. Carstairs' telephone bill. Everybody grumbled about Mrs. Carstairs' walks with the bull, but nobody ever complained to any authority, because the Carstairs family had been at Hatch Hall for two or three hundred years and had always done that sort of thing if they wanted to.

As time went on, I became increasingly fond of Mrs. Carstairs. Her singular Britishness was a constant source of delight, and remarks that fell from her gave me glimpses of a whole system of social values that I had never even guessed at until then. It was the zareba of social observance, thornier and more closely woven than any quickset hedge, by which the county protected themselves from climbers and outsiders.

She told me that Whitaker Wright, a celebrated Victorian swindler, had once spent a long weekend trying to talk her father into investing heavily in, and taking a seat on the board of directors of, what proved to be a wholly fraudulent enterprise. Her father had preserved his good name and his fortune because he knew that you couldn't trust a man an inch if he was capable of wearing leather buttons on a tweed jacket and Mr. Wright, all unknowing, had borne this mark of the beast.

There were other, and worse ways of committing social suicide. I was once driving Mrs. Carstairs over to look at a herd of cattle

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near Basingstoke when we passed a beautiful small seventeenth-century Palladian house, one of the most perfect of its kind I had ever seen. " Charmin'," said Mrs. Carstairs, looking coldly at it, " but the people are impossible. Milk-firsters."

" What—" I began.

" I'm always forgettin' what a barbarian you are," Mrs. Carstairs said. " I mean she puts milk into the teacup and pours the tea on top of it. And she calls her husband Mr. Jimpson—as if he was her gardener or her grocer. Mr. Jimpson did this or that. Mr. Jimpson was saying. They're really impossible people."

What attached me to Mrs. Carstairs most, however, was not the absoluteness of her uncalculating snobbery but the discovery that she had at one time been engaged to a black Arab horse.

There was another human-and-animal pair as familiar to the village as Mrs. Carstairs and her bull. Every day, except in the hunting season, Major Southeran used to ride through the village, giving Maximilian his exercise.

Maximilian was one of the most beautiful horses I have ever seen, and I usually managed to be at my dairy door looking out on to the roadway when the Major took him by, prompt as a train, at eleven-forty. Southeran had an Italian cavalry style, and the two of them made a fine sight—a perfect rider of a perfect horse.

The Major became quite used to seeing me waiting for him in the doorway, and after two years honoured me by touching the brim of his hat briefly whenever he passed me. He never spoke, and he didn't look at me, or smile—because, after all, he was a gentleman and I, as far as he was aware an ordinary working farmer, was not. It was one of those exquisitely limited relationships that only a stratified society can produce.

One day, I was in the dairy with Mrs. Carstairs, showing her the milk records of two cows that had recently passed the thousand-gallon mark. I looked at my watch and saw that it was eleven-forty. I went to the door and stood there, waiting for Major Southeran to appear. Mrs. Carstairs came and stood beside me, prattling on instructively about the art of feeding for a high butterfat content in milk. She fell silent in midsentence when the Major came in sight. He rode by woodenly, without the usual salute.

" I wonder what I can have done to offend old Southeran," I said.

" I expect it was me," said Mrs. Carstairs. " I was engaged to him once—or, rather . . ." She brushed her hair from her forehead with the first purely feminine gesture I had ever seen her use. " It was all the most terrible mistake. But it happened easily enough. I was huntin' regularly then—it was about six years before the war—

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and every time I went out, I met Southeran and Maximilian. We'd drift together at the meet. And we'd drift together at covert side. We wouldn't be very far apart when the hounds were runningt And we'd generally ride back part of the way together. You're no. a huntin' man; you wouldn't know about that. I mean about being dead-beat and riding home, too tired to talk, along squashy lanes in the winter twilight."

" I've read about it. You know, in that book I lent you, Sassoon's ' Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man.' "

" Oh, him—yes, I suppose so, but really you ought to read Surtees. The weather's so much worse in Surtees; it's more like the real thing. Anyway, in our second season Southeran asked me to marry him. We met at Three-Legged Cross that morning, drew blank in Privett Wood and at Matching Copse, and moved on to Nuthanger Woods. We were eating sandwiches and drinking out of our flasks. There's a perfect view up there. It was cold and sunny and lovely. Maximilian was looking like a picture. Southeran finished a sandwich and sat for a second looking at me, dabbing away a crumb or two and then he said, ' Kathy, why don't we get married ? '

" I'd been a widow for four years then, and I was beginning to get pretty sick of living alone, so I said yes. He leant across and squeezed my hand. ' Kathy,' he said, ' you've no idea how happy—' That second, a dog fox broke covert about three hundred yards from us—a big dog fox, going like smoke, with the pack after him in full cry. So that was the end of idle chatter for the time being.

" He came to see me the next morning, dressed up to the nines, and I don't doubt he had a ring with him. But the minute he came in at the door, I could see the whole thing was impossible. I'd had no idea what a scruffy little man he was off a horse. It was a problem in tact to get out of that corner, I can tell you, but I managed it without hurting his feelings, and we parted friends. It was all right until I gave the show away, a couple of weeks later."

She paused, and I stared at her, overcome with sheer delight at the idea of a set so completely horsy that its members could reach the stage of proposal and even engagement without dismounting.

" About a fortnight later," she went on, " we were going hell for leather across Boxford Gorse when Maximilian put his foot in a rabbit bury and went down for the hardest fall I ever saw. I was about two hundred yards behind, and I thought they were both goners. But by the time I was up to them Maximilian had scrambled up on to his feet, and Ned Southeran was up and rather groggily soothing him and feeling his legs looking very battered and white.

" It slipped out before I knew what I was saying : ' Oh, Major Southeran, is Maximilian all right ? ' He straightened up and

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looked me dead in the eye. I've never seen a man look so thunderstruck.

" He looked away from me to the horse as if he'd never seen it before ; then he looked back at me. ' Why yes,' he said. ' I'm happy to say that the horse is all right—and I'm all right, too.' Then he slowly turned his back on me, and he's never spoken to me since. It was a bad moment for us both. We'd realized that I'd been engaged to Maximilian for twelve hours."

" There's a story about something like that, by D. H. Lawrence, called ' St. Mawr,' " I said, for something to say.

" Oh ? " she said vaguely. " He sent his man round with the horse and a note offering it me as a gift a couple of days later. But I couldn't take it. I've never kept a horse or ridden to hounds since." She sighed. " I've been gabbing away. I must be getting home."

We went around to the wagon shed, where Clorinda's Champion was tethered to an oak pillar, quietly munching at some sweet-scented clover hay. She looked at him thoughtfully for a second or two, with an expression blended of tolerance and affection, as a wife who had known a wild romantic love in her youth might look at the solid, reliable companion of her middle years ; then she unhitched him and led him off down the village street.

* * *

FURTHER OUTLOOK

A man who had spent some hours listening to an economic debate in the House of Commons was seen to walk down the Thames Embankment and climb on to the stone parapet.

A policeman approached him. " Come, come, sir," he said, " you mustn't give way like this. Let's sit down and talk things over."

" What shall we talk about ? " asked the man.

" Let's talk about the future," said the policeman.

Ten minutes later the man and the policeman were seen, hand-in-hand, approaching the river.

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EUREKA!

Or, all my own work

The first man I saw . . . had been Eight Years upon a Project for extracting Sun-Beams out of Cucumbers, which were to be put into Vials hermetically sealed, and let out to warm the Air in raw inclement Summers. He told me, he did not doubt in Eight Years more, that he should be able to supply the Govenors Gardens with Sun-shine at a reasonable Rate; but he complained that his Stock was low, and intreated me to give him something as an encouragement to Ingenuity, especially since this had been a very dear Season for Cucumbers.

JONATHAN SWIFT, *Gulliver's Travels, published* 1726

Where Are The Snows of Yesteryear?

I wish I livd a Thowsen year Ago
Wurking for Sober six and Seven milers
And dubble Stages runnen safe and slo
The Orsis cum in Them days to the Bilers
But Now by meens of Powers of Steem forces
A-turning Coches into Smoakey Kettels
The Bilers seam a Cumming to the Orses
And Helps and naggs Will sune be out of Vittels
Poor Bruits I wunder How wee bee to Liv
When sutch a change of Orses is our Faits
No nothink need Be sifted in a Siv
May them Blowd ingins all Blow up their Grates
And Theaves of Oslers crib the Coles and Giv
Their blackgard Hannimuls a Feed of Slaits!

THOMAS HOOD, 1759-1845,
On Steam—By An Under-Ostler

A Posteriori

Gumbril Senior turned once more towards his son. "And how do you propose," he asked, "to make this money?"

"It came," said Gumbril Junior, "like an apocalypse, suddenly, like a divine inspiration. A grand and luminous idea came to me—the idea of Gumbril's Patent Small-Clothes."

"And what are Gumbril's Patent Small-Clothes?"

"A boon to those whose occupation is sedentary"; Gumbril Junior had already composed his prospectus and his first advertisements: "a comfort to all travellers, civilisation's substitute for

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steatopygism, indispensable to first-nighters, the concert-goers' friend, the . . . "

. . . "We want scientific descriptions, not litanies," said Gumbril Senior. "What *are* Gumbril's Patent Small-Clothes?"

"Scientifically, then," said Gumbril Junior, "my Patent Small-Clothes may be described as trousers with a pneumatic seat, inflateable by means of a tube fitted with a valve; the whole constructed of stout seamless red rubber, enclosed between two layers of cloth."

"I must say," said Gumbril Senior in a tone of somewhat grudging approbation, "I have heard of worse inventions."

ALDOUS HUXLEY, *Antic Hay*

Moonshine

He made an instrument to know
If the moon shine at full or no;
That would, as soon as e'er she shone, straight
Whether 'twere day or night demonstrate;
Tell what her d'ameter t'an inch is,
And prove that she's not made of green cheese.

SAMUEL BUTLER, 1612-1680, *Sidrophel, The Rosicrucian Conjuror*, from "*Hudibras*"

Gate-Crashing

There was a short silence after this, and then the Knight went on again. "I'm a great hand at inventing things. Now I daresay you noticed, the last time you picked me up, that I was looking rather thoughtful?"

"You were a little grave," said Alice.

"Well, just then I was inventing a new way of getting over a gate—would you like to hear it?"

"Very much indeed," said Alice politely.

"I'll tell you how I came to think of it," said the Knight. "You see, I said to myself 'The only difficulty is with the feet: the *head* is high enough already.' Now, first I put my head on the top of the gate—then the head's high enough—then I stand on my head—then the feet are high enough, you see—then I'm over . . ."

LEWIS CARROLL, *Alice Through The Looking Glass*

Caveat

Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

ECCLESIASTES, VII, 29

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The Advancement of Learning

After five years spent in retirement, Francis Bacon died of a chill caught while experimenting on refrigeration by stuffing a chicken full of snow.

BERTRAND RUSSELL, *History Of Western Philosophy*

In Spite of Scruples . . .

John Stuart Mill,
By a mighty effort of will,
Overcame his natural bonhomie
And wrote " Principles Of Political Economy."

EDMUND CLERIHEW BENTLEY, *Clerihews Complete*

Heard Melodies Are Sweet, But . . .

I have tried experiments with all kinds of animals on their powers of hearing shrill notes. I have gone through the whole of the Zoological Gardens, using an apparatus arranged for the purpose. It consists of one of my little whistles at the end of a walking-stick—that is, in reality, a long tube ; it has a bit of india-rubber pipe under the handle, a sudden squeeze upon which forces a little air into the whistle and causes it to sound . . . I have walked through the streets of a town with an instrument like that which I used in the Zoological Gardens, and made nearly all the little dogs turn round, but not the large ones. At Berne, where there appear to be more large dogs lying about the streets than in any other towns in Europe, I have tried the whistle for hours together, on a great many large dogs, but could not find one that heard it.

FRANCIS GALTON, 1822-1911, *Inquiries Into Human Faculty*

These Above All

I care not if you bridge the seas,
Or ride secure the cruel sky,
Or build consummate palaces
Of metal or of masonry.

But have you wine and music still,
And statues and a bright-eyed love,
And foolish thoughts of good and ill,
And prayers to them who sit above ?

JAMES ELROY FLECKER, 1884-1915

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CAPRA

He moved towards her silently — a queer, solemn, half-menacing dance across the grass

by SARBAN

ONE summer night during the war when business took me up from my post in the Red Sea to Cairo, I dined with my old Uncle Bentham.

I had first met Uncle Bentham in Peiraieus. He had spent his whole life, apart from the four years of the first World War, in the shipping agency business, but had never been able to stick to any one company or one office for long. I do not suppose he had ever made much money; he knew his business well, but I had the impression that he had never been particularly interested in it. He was interested in books and gardening, which are hardly the sort of hobbies to cling to if you are going to spend your life moving from one Near Eastern port to another every two or three years.

Now, at the age of sixty-five, he had rented a small house in Maadi and intended to settle down there and grow flowers for the rest of his span. All his contacts with England must have withered away long ago; so far as anyone knew, he had never been married.

We dined, disregarding the mosquitoes, on the porch of Uncle Bentham's little house, screened by Bougainvillæa and bignonia. A small table lamp gave us enough light to skim a moth off the soup by, but not enough to outshine Vega winking down at us through the fuzzy tip of a casuarina.

After we had emptied our coffee cups, the talk turned upon a leave I had spent in Srinagar the previous year—Uncle Bentham, it seemed, had been there in 1910—and from India to hunting. Uncle Bentham then fell silent.

"I never liked shooting big animals," he said at last. "Butcher's business. Too much blood." He paused again, poured me out a drink and sat down again and smoked his pipe.

I knew a fellow once, said Uncle Bentham. Very keen on shooting, but an awful dud at it. I met him years ago in India. In fact he was the chap I was at Srinagar with that time. He was in the Indian Army. His name was Tommy Lobeck. His shooting was a standing joke. I never knew any man work so hard at a

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sport and remain so bad at it without losing one jot of his enthusiasm. He'd have walked from Travancore to Tibet for the sake of a shot at some horned beast, and walked back just as cheerfully after missing the damn thing. He must have crawled over extensive stretches of India on his belly at one time or another, under the fond delusion that he was unperceived by various wary markhors and moufflons and stags and mountain goats, and I don't believe he ever so much as took the hair off the chine of one. But he would have had a grand day.

People pulled his leg in a kindly way, because he enjoyed the joke of it as much as they did. He was one of the simplest, kindliest chaps I've ever known, with unlimited powers of admiration for men and women who knew things he didn't and could do things he couldn't. He was the sort of chap anyone could impose on and borrow his last anna from.

After I left Karachi I lost touch with him for a few years. Then, by chance, I ran across him in France in 1915. Coincidences like that were always happening in that war. Or, at least, they seemed to happen oftener then. And, sure enough, just to show that she could do it again, chance arranged another meeting in Mesopotamia. We saw a good deal of each other for about a year there. We were both in Basra. Then Tommy went up the Tigris for the advance on Baghdad, and the next time I saw him he was on a stretcher. He had a bad head wound and they shipped him off to India. I saw him on board the ship and I thought I should never see him again.

But Tommy had always said he would take a lot of killing. The Turk hadn't hit him in quite the right place. He got over it; or at least they patched him up. I heard from him after the armistice. He was out of the army then. He said he had a silver plate in his skull and sometimes didn't sleep very well, but that was all he said about himself. After that I lost track of him again.

I got a job with Stephen Wilson & Sons after the war, and in 1922 I took over their branch at Patras. Trade wasn't very brisk just then. Greece was in a bit of a mess, what with the Turkish war and one thing or another. Still, I didn't mind Patras. I had quite a nice little garden there. I had some rather good carnations.

However. About Tommy Lobeck. It was one morning during that summer: pretty warm weather, I remember. I was sitting in my funny little office there—we had the ground floor of an old house: looked more like a stable with an old-fashioned iron strong box and a few faded posters stuck on the walls than a shipping office—when the servant brought me a couple of cards in. The first meant nothing to me: Capitano something—some Spanish name which I've completely forgotten; but the other was Colonel

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Thomas Lobeck. I jumped up and shouted for him to come in.

Four people came in and arranged themselves round that office, and I'm sure they were the oddest collection of people I've ever had in any office of mine. Not odd in the sense that you'd stare after them in the street; not even unusual, perhaps, in a place like Patras. What I mean is that three of them struck me as odd associates for the one I knew. I say knew, but actually I shouldn't have recognized Tommy if he hadn't introduced himself.

Once he had been lean and tough as a whippet, brown and keen looking and fit. Poor fellow, the wound and months and months in hospital had taken it out of him. He was thinner than ever, but he had lost the wiry look. The brown of his skin was blotchy now. His eyes were bloodshot and pouched. He looked years older than he was. I saw at once that it wasn't only the silver plate. The glass bottle had a good deal to do with it.

Not that I took Tommy in all at once. One of the others held a lot of my attention at first. It was a young woman, and Tommy introduced her as his wife. I had never imagined that he would get married.

Diana, Tommy called her. I should have opened my eyes no matter whose wife she'd been. Diana! I remember thinking, while I watched her over my dusty desk, that there was something felicitous, something symbolic in the name. My first thought, I admit, was: By Jove! Tommy's bagged something at last. And what a girl! Lucky chap. Then, looking from one to the other of them, from Tommy, so broken and ailing and prematurely aged, all the life and gaiety gone to ashes in him—looking from him to that sprightly girl, made for dances and a frolicking good time, I began to wonder. I caught myself feeling something very like pity for him. Odd, because she really was lovely.

It's curious how with some women the things you remember them by are trifles that don't contribute to their beauty at all. Diana Lobeck had a cloud of lovely light brown hair and sparkling dark grey eyes and an exquisite neck, but the two things I remember most clearly about her was the surprising pallor of the skin in the deep valley made by the parting of her hair—and I don't think I've ever noticed particularly the parting of a woman's hair before or since—and one other little thing: the division of the cartilage at the tip of her nose was very distinctly marked; it made a little dimple there.

She was very young, and she was beautifully dressed; so elegant as to look quite out of place between those dirty distempered walls, between my battered desk and a press full of old files and grubby ledgers. What I was feeling about Tommy was the pity of his not having found her before; before the war and his wound,

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before he'd grown old. Though, of course, she'd have been a young child before the war.

There were four people who came in. The third was the Capitano Dago. An Argentine, as it turned out. He looked like a Hidalgo descended in an unbroken line from the Cid Campeador. He had a drill suit on and a lot of new gold braid, as smart as the captain of the *Mauretania*. He smoked cigarettes all the time and never spoke a word.

Nor did Tommy say very much. All the talking was done by the fourth person who introduced himself as Yves Falzon. My word "odd" seems really quite inapplicable to him, because he was a type you could find any day in Cairo or Alexandria or any Levant city. What was odd was that Tommy Lobeck should have teamed up with him. He said he was French. I've no doubt he had a French passport, and he spoke the glib, flat, Levantine French fast enough and much better than English. He was not more than thirty, handsome in a Southern way, where bone doesn't count, and evidently what the French call a sportsman; a virtuoso, I guessed, in all the more expensive and spectacular outdoor diversions.

Nobody could have presented a greater contrast to poor Tommy Lobeck in the state he had fallen into. This fellow Falzon was sun bronzed, hot blooded, full of vigour. You could just see him on a *plage*, showing off his muscles and his figure and his sun tan with a conceited flamboyancy the more exasperating because he *had* something to show off. One thing I noticed while he talked to me that gave him some sharper individuality and prevented my putting him down as just the general run of rich, conceited Levantine playboy: he had fascinating eyes. And I mean by fascinating, something that antagonizes as well as holds. They were dark, of course, and hot, with a humorous, even droll look, but with an unmaskable malice in them: the malice of the most revolting sort of small boy who has fully realized his own nuisance value and thoroughly enjoys every second of his victim's longing to be rid of him. Falzon's were the eyes of a man who is too interested in his fellows.

It appeared that Tommy Lobeck hadn't known I was in Patras until that morning. The party were cruising on a yacht which belonged to Diana's people, and the Hidalgo was its captain. A seaman was sick and they wanted to arrange for his repatriation to France; they had also one or two other bits of business to transact. The harbour master had advised them that Wilson's would be willing to act as temporary agents for the yacht. Then Tommy had discovered that I was Wilson's manager.

My Mr. Papadopoulou took care of the business and they

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carried me off to lunch on board the yacht. There was another member of the party there: a grey-haired French woman artist in a shapeless sort of long dress that looked as if it was made of flour sacks badly dyed in dirty purple. I've long since forgotten what she was called, if I ever rightly got the name. Everybody called her La Marquise, and perhaps she was one. Then there was the yacht's first officers—another Argentine; a young man who looked like Rudolph Valentino.

He, Falzon and Diana Lobeck made most of the conversation, and contrived to make a very great deal of noise. We drank a lot of gin and ouzou before lunch and a lot of wine at lunch and there was a pretty continuous run of hilarity, the exact causes of which I couldn't very well have stated. Falzon was the wit of the party, and I began to see, uncomfortably, in spite of the drink and the general atmosphere of noisy intimacy, that Tommy was his butt. Moreover, I should have needed to be as blind as a bat not to see that Falzon all the time was showing off to Diana.

Tommy drank and blinked and talked a bit about old times with me among the rattle and the laughing of the others. I thought his wound still hurt him: he had a habit of twitching his face every now and again as if the nerves were jumping with pain.

It came out that they had all been invited to go up and stay a week or so with Leonidas Stavroulou at Skantros across the Gulf of Corinth in Acarnania. I knew Leon Stavroulou quite well. He was as rich as Croesus, and you couldn't lift a stone in Greece at that time, as the saying goes, without finding him underneath it. We had done a certain amount of business with him, and I had been up to his villa at Skantros once. Falzon, it seemed, was well acquainted with Stavroulou and quite at home in Greece. He spoke Greek fluently.

"We shall give Tommy some shooting," he said.

Tommy asked me what there was to shoot at Skantros. I had no idea, but guessed there might be a few partridges.

"Partridges!" cries Falzon. "I have told Tommy all the way to here that he shall shoot a wild goat. He does not believe me. I swear I know the only place in Greece where you find the wild goat. The ibex, with the big horns."

With his emphatic English and his habitual sly look, it was impossible to tell whether he was mocking or not. For all I knew there might well have been wild goats skipping all over the mountains round Skantros. I had, in fact, an indistinct memory of seeing a good number of heads of different sorts of animals with horns hanging up in Stavroulou's imitation Tudor hall. So when Tommy, with a gleam of his old enthusiasm, appealed to me, I could only say there might well be some wild goats up there.

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Later, I thought it was a pity I wasn't better informed.

There was something about the topic that I didn't quite grasp: some private joke. Diana and Falzon giggled and spluttered at every mention of wild goat, the young officer guffawed, the Marquise grimaced and even the Capitano let a smile slink among the folds of his long face. Only Tommy solemnly nodded and took the subject seriously.

We parted late in the afternoon, and the next day an invitation came for me from Leon Stavroulou to spend the weekend at Skantros. The yacht was going over to Naupaktos, so I crossed in her with the rest of the party.

Skantros is a tiny village in the hills. The road to it in those days was only a mule track with a few of the bigger boulders rolled out of the way. Stavroulou's car could just get up and down.

You go through the village, where the little stone houses hang to the sides of the valley like swallows' nests to a wall, then through a cleft where a stream comes down, and so into another little valley where Leon's house stands.

He had spent a tremendous amount of money on the place. The hillsides round it were terraced and planted; the level ground before the house was well laid out, and he had even succeeded in making a lawn and got a cedar or two to grow and shade it at one corner. There was some thin natural pine forest on the hills, and Leon had had a lot of young stone-pines, firs and cypresses planted. Being well up in the hills and so much cooler, the place was not grilled brown like the lowlands. There was a good show of flowers still, and the grass and the leaves of walnuts and vines were green. There was a good smell of warm resin from the pines.

It is a big house, as mixed in its styles as Leon Stavroulou is mixed in his culture and allegiances. He has had his English phase. The entrance hall, for instance, was panelled; it had a wide brick fireplace and a wooden staircase, and, of course, several suits of armour and an array of trophies of the chase.

The pseudo-Tudor touch is singularly unhappy in a country that cries for broad stretches of marble and colonnades to break the sunlight with cool shadows. I remarked as much to Tommy, but his only interest was in the heads round the walls.

Falzon at once revived the wild goat joke. There, sure enough, was the head of a goat; more goat than ibex, anyway, bearded and respectably horned and provided with yellow glass eyes. Tommy asked where it came from. Leon, who, I'll bet, had never noticed the thing before, was going to say he hadn't an idea, and would probably have added that he'd look up the Interior Decorator's bill if we liked, when Falzon steps in with a story which he tells

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with a perfectly straight face and a wealth of circumstantial detail about it having been shot by a local hunter—Niko somebody or other—on the cliffs of Mount Vardusi. When Tommy still looks unconvinced, Falzon appeals to young George Stavroulou who, being in the joke, swears that every word is gospel truth. George even gets out some book in French to find the exact name of the thing, and Falzon jabs a finger and exclaims: "There! That is it: *Capra Aegagrus*. You see the book says he is here in Greece."

In spite of Falzon's eyes I began to be convinced myself. I thought he couldn't help looking as if he was hoaxing you even when he was telling the truth. Besides, though they might have some private joke about the matter, what was the point of pretending that wild goats existed in a particular place if they didn't? Falzon clinched the matter by declaring that he would produce the man who had shot this particular specimen and saying he was ready to start out with Tommy to Mount Vardusi and show him an identical one.

"I will not say you shall shoot him," says Falzon, with a wink behind Tommy's back. "That is your affair. But I will wager Niko shall show you a fine head. If he does not, I will pay you one hundred pounds!"

I thought then that I might perhaps have been unjust to Falzon. It cheered me a lot to see Tommy brisk up at the prospect of an expedition. I even began to think that Falzon's raillery and jeering might have a therapeutic action, if by irritating and rousing Tommy they could stir him out of his lethargy and make him take an interest in something again. George Stavroulou, I knew, was not a bad-hearted young fellow; brainless, but not unkind. Even if there were no goats on Mount Vardusi, the old Tommy had gone further on a mere rumour of game and enjoyed the jaunt.

Before Tommy got too drunk to talk coherently that night it was all arranged, and George had sent off a messenger to find Niko the hunter. Tommy, George and Falzon were to go on this expedition and it was going to take them a week. The significant thing to me when I turned it over in my mind was that Falzon was going. Tommy would be leaving Diana behind, but Falzon would be away, too.

The following day some of us went for a walk. Diana came, George Stavroulou, and of course, Falzon. George took us up the valley of the stream to show us the source. He said it would surprise us. At the head of the valley, under some towering crags, the stream rushed out of a cave; it came tumbling over boulders in a white cascade and then filled a pool round which there was a green meadow bright with flowers and kept fresh by the splashing

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drops. The sun poured down into the hollow, but a grove of poplars and planes shaded the meadow, and under them the grass was long and cool.

On one side, the hill was bare, fanged with great upstanding rocks; on the other it was wooded. The pool was partly artificial. Half round, it was lined with ancient masonry over which the grass and ferns bent down towards the water; but on the near side the bank shelved down in a little beach of white sand, and through the beautifully clear water you could see that the bottom, too, was clean white sand. It was the sort of place that must have been sacred to some god in ancient times.

Sure enough, what George particularly wanted to show us was a few courses of masonry a few yards across the meadow from the pool and just at the foot of the wooded hill, which he said were the foundations of a temple. Fig trees and olives overhung the ruin and behind it the thick wood of round-headed pines and evergreen oak clothed the hill. It was a delightful place, with such contrast of glittering rocks and shaded green grass, of hot sun and sparkling water inviting you to bathe.

Diana announced that she was coming to bathe there every morning while she stayed. You find such spots here and there in Greece, though it's not often nowadays that you find them so green and clean. But, of course, this place was part of Stavroulou's estate and he had it kept neat and attractive: it pleased him to be able to show off a Greek temple to his visitors.

"Temple to whom?" asks Diana.

George confesses he's forgotten, but Falzon takes charge. "Artemis the Huntress," he says theatrically, with a gesture offering her the freedom of the place. "The Goddess Diana."

An old gardener had followed us up. While Falzon went on showing Diana over the ruins, though I don't suppose he knew one whit more about them than George, I saw George turn to this old fellow and say something sharp to him about a few goat tracks there were in the sand. Naturally, unless you keep a sharp eye open for trespassing goats, you soon won't have a blade of green left in a place like that. The old chap without bothering to look at the footmarks, shook his head and grunted something which I took to be an offended rejection of the idea that a goat could possibly have trespassed there.

George, who was standing nearer to the marks, swore at him and was plainly asking if he took him for a fool. What else could have made them? The old fellow went across and bent over the marks, and George must have said something pretty telling, for the gardener straightened up as if he'd been kicked in the seat of his baggy trousers and went fairly scurrying off down the path

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back to the garden. I remember thinking I must get one or two of those words George had used off by heart: they might have a salutary effect on my office messenger.

Falzon was working the Artemis theme to death and making up to Diana outrageously, all the time with that sly mockery in his eyes. I could guess the ideas the place was putting in his head.

We climbed the hill, up through the wood and out across the bare mountain top. There it was all pale grey stones, pitted by the weather, and sun-baked earth and great tracts of withering asphodel. Diana looked at the wilted leaves and the dry, tough stalks, some of them still with a pale flower or two on them, and said in a disappointed tone:

"Is *that* asphodel? What a dull flower! What a dull place Elysium must have been if that's what the flowers were like."

I remember Falzon ground his boot down on one of the plants and said with sudden gloominess: "Elysium was where the dead went."

We lingered on the hilltop there for a while. It was peaceful and lonely under the blue sky. The stony hill ran down in a long slope southwards from us with no more cultivation between us and the cliffs. There, below, was the blue Gulf of Corinth.

I had not much chance to talk to Tommy alone that weekend. Even if I had had, I don't suppose he would have talked about what was worrying him. We had never been quite intimate enough for that. It was clear enough. I suppose I told myself it wasn't my affair; but all the same it saddened me. Tommy had been too good a man to be treated like that by such people. Naturally, I had begun to see the wild goat joke now. The old fellow with the horns . . . It wasn't very pleasant.

At lunch that Sunday Leon announced that he was going to give a fancy dress party the next Saturday, and we were all to come. He was inviting some people from Athens and some of his friends from Patras. It was going to be a small party, but gay. Gay and daring, Falzon said.

He and Tommy and George were setting off on their expedition on Monday morning. Niko the hunter had turned up and sworn apparently by every saint with a Greek name that he could find a wild goat on Mount Vardusi. Leon Stavroulou was going to Athens for a day or two. The Marquise and Diana were staying on at Skantros together.

I went back to Patras that evening. Falzon came down in the car with me as far as Skantros village. As we slowed up in the street, I remember, we passed the poor old gardener who'd looked at the goat tracks that morning. He was talking to the village priest. I remembered the incident simply because Falzon shouted

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some witticism to them from the car, and I thought it must have been an indecent one: they both looked horribly scandalized. Falzon had the driver stop at a little skin and leather-worker's shop. I couldn't think what he wanted there, but when I began to ask him, he simply gave me a sly grin and swaggered into the place, and I left him there.

Leon Stavroulou had invited a British Vice-Consul. Fancy dress parties are a bore. A man's faced with the awkward choice between looking a fool if he dresses up and feeling his age if he doesn't. However, quite early in life I acquired one fancy dress and I've used it on every occasion since when I couldn't get out of wearing one. When I was in Baghdad before the war I bought a complete set of Arab clothes: you know, a red and white check head cloth and a gold and black *agal* and a white robe and a big brown cloak, *aba*, don't you call it, to go over everything? The outfit is fancy enough outside an Arab country, and it has the great merit both of being comfortable to wear and looking dignified.

The Vice-Consul had a costume on hand, too. He'd been in the Navy, and once, when they crossed the Line, he'd taken the part of Neptune. He got out the costume and hung a few more bits of dried seaweed on it—it consisted chiefly of green fishing net and dried seaweed, but he was adequately garbed underneath—and got a new shaft put in his trident and we were both ready.

We crossed in our launch early on Saturday morning and hired a couple of mules to take us up to Skantros. It was nearly as quick as going up in a car; in fact, there were places where a mule could get along faster than a car.

We arrived at the villa a little before luncheon, and there was no one about. The hunters, it seemed, were not yet back, and Leon and his party from Athens were not expected until afternoon. The Vice-Consul had never been to the villa before, but he had heard a good deal about it. As we were standing in Leon's baronial hall, I was going to ask him about the wild goat's head; but when I looked round for it, I saw that it had gone.

I took him round the garden. He wasn't particularly interested in flowers, though. After a few minutes he said, "There's the remains of a temple on Stavroulou's estate, somewhere, I believe. I should like to see that."

So I took him up the valley to the source of the stream. There, sitting on the brink of the pool, was Diana. She was sitting there, dabbling her toes in the water and combing out her hair like a mermaid. I introduced the Vice-Consul, and noticing the towel on the grass beside her, asked her what the water was like. "It's simply marvellous," she said. "I've spent most of my time here this week."

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I said I hoped she hadn't been bored, being left alone—oh, but then, there was the Marquise. I was looking down at the sand. Her footmarks were all over it, but also, I noticed, the gardener had taken advantage of George's absence to do nothing about the goat's. There were still hoof-prints going down to the water. I don't know what Diana thought I was looking for, but she coloured and said, stiffly, " The others will be back for luncheon." Then she began to talk brightly to the Vice-Consul about the temple, telling him all that Falzon had told her about it being dedicated to Diana. He laughed.

" You've got it a bit wrong," he said. He was well read in Greek archæology. Not much was known about this particular temple, but he mentioned one or two books in which it was noticed. " It seems likely that it was sacred to Pan," he told us. " One of his very few shrines in Greece. The only other one I know about is in Arcadia. Apart from his cave on the Acropolis."

Diana didn't look in the least put out. She'd lapped up everything Falzon told her that flattered herself, but she was about as interested in the archæology of temples as a cat is in the decoration of cream-jugs.

" Pan ? " she said. " You mean the faun sort of creature ? Oh, I say. *That's* what gave Yves the idea. Oh, I see now. He knows all about it. He was just telling me it was Diana's, to pull my leg."

I really could not believe that she was so innocent as she sounded. " What idea did it give him ? " I asked. She looked at me with a mystery-making expression like a little child's.

" Ah ! " she said. " It's a secret."

I noticed that after she left us the Vice-Consul confined all his remarks pointedly to the ruins of the temple. It wasn't really very much of a ruin, but he was impressively learned about what there was of it. I began to think I ought to read some books about ancient Greece myself.

In the garden, when we returned, I found the Marquise with young George Stavroulou. I thought George had a very sheepish look. I asked him what luck, and he pulled a face and said he'd tell me later. Tommy, he said, was in the house. George and the Vice-Consul went off together, and I would have gone to find Tommy, but the Marquise held me. She was a queer old thing. She was rather deaf and she talked all the time in a soft, rapid voice ; in French, of course, which I didn't follow too easily. That didn't matter much, because she didn't expect you to reply. She had a way of guessing what you might say and dismissing it before you did.

She had been prowling among the geraniums. She dismissed

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those. They were past their prime. "You've been to the temple of Apollo?" she said. "Pan," I said. "Apollo—it is nothing much—I have visited it," she said, all in a breath. "It is without interest. Of course, from the point of view of archæology . . . You have read so-and-so's book, of course. I mean, æsthetically. But that is Greece. A country for the savant. For an artist, so much of it is a disappointment. Yes, a romantic spot. The young Diana likes it. For her it has a certain attraction. All the same, I have told her it is not quite suitable to bathe there alone. But . . ."

It was amazing what tolerance of the unconventionality of the post-war young woman she conveyed with her shoulders and one emancipating wave of the hand. I said loudly and distinctly that it was a private place, and tried to draw privacy on the air with my hands.

"Yes, no doubt it is private," she said. "But there is that wood. I should be afraid. She is too bold. One should not expose oneself. It is this poor Tommy; he ought not to leave her alone . . . She becomes bored. Then this Falzon. You have noticed? It is one thing to play a farce. But . . . I said to him yesterday. Why, yes, to Falzon. I said to him . . ."

I think my voice must have sounded loud even to her. She looked startled and said, "Certainly, he was here yesterday and the day before . . ."

She may well have wondered what it mattered to me. I was asking myself that again before I reached the house. Though I had been a friend of Tommy's years ago, he was in a different set now. His wife and the rest of them were strangers to me. Naturally, she would tell me a lie. Nothing more natural in the world. Nothing more foolish than to feel indignant about it.

Well, as it happened, before I could find Tommy I met Falzon himself, and with him two or three of the other guests from Patras who had just come up from Naupaktos in the car. There they were, standing in the hall, listening to Falzon and laughing. I soon had a pretty clear idea of the trick Falzon and George Stavroulou had played. If I hadn't got the story then I shouldn't have been ignorant of it for long. Falzon was like a young cockerel that can't stop crowing. He had gone to a good deal of trouble over his practical joke and he was going to get his money's worth of triumph and self-advertisement out of it. We had the story with more and more embroidery and more and more relish all through lunch and all afternoon.

From Tommy I heard the plain facts. It was a simple enough joke. Perhaps the sort of joke Tommy himself might have enjoyed fifteen years before, and might himself have played on someone, but in a different spirit from Falzon.

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Falzon had organized quite a little expedition. Away they'd gone, he and Tommy and George Stavroulou and Niko the hunter, on mule back, and a string of pack mules with camping kit and plenty of food and wine behind them; and they'd travelled over the mountains for a couple of days to a little hamlet near Mount Vardusi, Niko's native place. It could have been a good trip.

At the hamlet it was all arranged that they should get up at three the next morning and climb up to the cliffs where the goats were supposed to be, when Falzon said he had received a message by a gendarme that there was an urgent cable from Paris for him at Skantros and he had to go back at once. He left everything laid on, entrusted to Niko, and rode off in the night. Tommy took it all in good faith, got up enthusiastically the next morning and climbed the mountain with Niko. George never had any intention of going up.

So Tommy went plodding off, hours and hours, slogging up the mountain paths, first in the dark, then in the dawn, and then in the hot sunshine. They went miles, and upwards all the way. Of course, Niko was leading him a roundabout way, as he'd been told, but even when they came out on some ledges from which they looked straight down on to the hamlet they'd started from, Tommy didn't fully tumble to the trick.

He wasn't quite sure that it was the same hamlet, because they'd arrived there after dark. He said he thought it was a bit near houses to expect to find wild goat, but, of course, he'd never been shooting in Greece. Naturally, he couldn't understand Niko; all he could do was to follow his gestures. He said Niko acted like a proper shikari, and after a lot more hard going, he began to make signs indicating that he'd seen something.

Tommy got his glasses on the place Niko pointed out, but could see nothing. However, it seems they did an elaborate stalk, crawling up and over the rocks, with Tommy taking all the professional precautions, keeping his head down and the rest of it, and growing fearfully excited as they got nearer and nearer. It was only when Niko stood up, with an air of having finished his job, and began rolling a cigarette, that Tommy realized he'd been had.

They'd arrived at a ledge of rocks high above the hamlet where, indeed, there were plenty of signs of goats, and goatherds, too; and conspicuously exhibited on top of a rock was the old stuffed goat's head from Stavroulou's baronial hall with a card with Falzon's compliments pinned to it. There was a row of men and boys from the hamlet sitting there. They'd probably followed Niko up the night before when he took up the head by a short cut, and had been sitting there ever since, waiting to be entertained.

Niko smoked his cigarette, I dare say, and lounged and grinned

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without ever guessing that the wad of drachma notes in his pocket might have been a very low price for the risk he was running. But Tommy simply signed to him to pick up the head and to lead him back by the near way to the hamlet. He did not mention the joke at all to George, and George, not having Falzon's impudence, came back rather crestfallen and humiliated by Tommy's dignity, lamely trying to exculpate himself. Tommy dismissed his part in it as coldly as he dismissed Niko's.

I went downstairs, convinced that he had dismissed the joke itself as merely the most insulting way Falzon could think of to get him out of the way for a couple of days while he had Diana to himself. He never mentioned his wife when he told me the story, but he clearly took it for granted that I knew all there was to know. He refused to come down for luncheon. He stayed in his dressing room with a bottle of whisky all afternoon.

I had not been very enthusiastic about this party; Leon Stavroulou's friends were not people I particularly cared for. I looked forward to it even less now, after this affair. Falzon's conceit was insufferable, and Diana's pretence that her husband and Falzon were the best of friends was exasperating. When she laughed at the joke against Tommy I could have smacked her.

The place began to babble with French and Greek, and Falzon was in his element. Leon came back late in the afternoon and brought three or four friends, including an ash-blonde young woman who looked like a cabaret artiste, from Athens. The Marcopolis and the Klitos sisters from Patras and several more turned up, and, of course, there was the captain and the young officer from the yacht. By six or seven o'clock the party was complete and the atmosphere was lively. Unconstrained might be the word, at least for Falzon, the ash-blonde from Athens, Mrs. Marcopoli, and one or two others.

There was a short interval of quiet when people went off to change into fancy dress. It didn't take me long, and having put my Arab clothes on, I slipped downstairs again quickly, hoping to catch the Vice-Consul alone: Marcopoli had engaged him most of the time. I wanted to warn him and get him to help to keep Tommy and Falzon apart.

He was on the terrace talking to the Marquise. He had the end of his fish-net draped up over his arm, revealing his hairy calves, and he was smoking a cigarette among a face-full of highly inflammable tow whiskers. The Marquise's costume seemed to be one of her ordinary flour sack robes spattered all over with moons and stars and signs of the Zodiac. Night, I suppose, or Astrology, or something like that. I had lost the opportunity.

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I wandered back into the hall. The musicians were arranging themselves at one end and a servant was putting powder down.

Wavering a little and gazing up at the wall on the far side stood Tommy, changed now into his dinner-jacket and holding a whisky glass in his hand. He was drunk, and the creature he was conversing with was the old billy-goat, now restored to his place above the panelling. I took Tommy by the elbow, hoping to steer him out before somebody else came in. He ignored me and went on addressing the goat.

" It is not possible," he kept saying. " It is not possible."

I jogged him until he became aware of me. He took my presence mildly and introduced me, after a few waves of his glass and a couple of near misses on the pronunciation, to his friend: "*Capr' Aegragrush*, M'shr Bensham. M'shr Bensham, *Capra*—well, never mind." Then he resumed the thread.

" It is not possible," he informed us both. " It is not possible that the blood of bullsh and of goa'sh should take away sins.

" Hebrewsh," he said. " Hebrewsh, old boy. My father was a parson. I know."

I couldn't get him upstairs, but I did manage to get him into a little sitting room and folded him up in a chair, hoping he'd go to sleep.

It was the sort of party where one feels next morning's headache coming on early in the evening. Too much noise; too many mixed drinks. The fancy dress idea, of course, was Falzon's and Diana's. Not everybody responded. Leon let us down by appearing in a dinner-jacket. The Hidalgo wore his uniform, but his junior appeared as something South American in a sombrero and a short jacket. The ash-blonde who, I suspected, earned her living in fancy dress, scored off some of the other women with an expensive evening frock. True, the sort of frock she wore would look like fancy dress at a party now, but skimpiness was the fashion then.

Diana and Falzon deliberately timed their entry. Everybody was there and the party was in full swing when Diana burst on our view. She was, of course, Diana: Artemis the Huntress. I can't well describe her costume: there was little to describe. It looked to me to consist of about a couple of yards of tulle and nothing else except a pair of sandals tied with blue ribbons crossed round her legs. She had done her hair in an imitation of the ancient Greek fashion and she had a quiver at her back and a little bow in her hand. For figure and complexion she was matchless in that company. The ash-blonde looked simply bleached beside her. She was radiant, with her large eyes flashing and soft hair shining, and her skin, bare or beneath the tulle, glowing a brighter

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or a softer rose. There was a gasp of admiration as she came down the room, and a kind of involuntary falling back in wonder; then there was an even louder gasp and some penetrating shrieks from the women as Falzon came dancing from the other end of the hall to meet Diana.

I saw now why he'd gone to the currier's shop. He had got himself made a pair of goatskin breeches, all shaggy brown hair from waist to ankles, and a little tail tacked on behind. He had got the tips of two small horns and fixed them with some arrangement of wire among his dark curls. He was naked above the waist and Nature completed his costume there, for he had a chest as hairy as a doormat and dark little hairs all over his back and shoulders, while his skin was naturally brown from swimming and sun-bathing. With those sly, dark eyes, and his hot, lascivious look, he was a satyr straight from the wood and ripe for revels.

It occurred to me once or twice that night that I needn't have bothered to dress up. By wearing my ordinary clothes and behaving normally I should have achieved originality and distinction among that crowd. I stayed sober, and I didn't dance. I never learned, you know. I don't suppose I could have danced in those clothes.

I just stood there and looked sourly on. The Vice-Consul enjoyed himself. He handed his trident to one of the servants and tucked the tail of his fish-net into his belt of old rope and whirled off in a waltz with Diana. Everybody danced with her, except perhaps the captain. George Stavroulou grabbed her for a waltz and spun with her till they were both a white blur and Diana's bit of tulle was more floating than fixed.

But, above all, she belonged to Falzon that evening. Where everybody was abandoned he was extravagant, but accomplished. Diana partnered him with an ease that looked practised. She drank nothing, but she was drunker with rhythm and noise and Falzon's corybantics than the tipsiest woman there. After a while, no one else got a chance to dance with her. Falzon had organized the dance, as he had organized the wild goat chase, for his own personal amusement. I watched him and wondered what had prompted his fancy to display himself as a satyr, for, obviously, he had thought of getting up a dance after he had thought of his costume. Then the course of his ideas was easy to guess: if he was a satyr, Diana must be a nymph. He had dared her to wear nothing; she had compromised with what persons so slightly acquainted with the Classics as we might accept as a goddess's minimum. But of all the queer game that lay up in the brakes of his imagination, what had started a satyr?

The temple? Was it a temple of Pan? Did he know it? The wild goat joke: I remembered the old gardener bending over

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those footmarks in the sand by the pool and jerking up with that frightened look on his face. I wished suddenly that I had been able to understand the remark Falzon had thrown at the gardener and the priest from the car, and why it had shocked them. I began to hate the sight of those goatskins; I wished the party was well over and everybody safely in bed. I began to prowl in and out very uneasily and jumped with alarm every time one of those confounded women let out a higher screech than usual.

Two or three times in the course of the evening I had looked into the little sitting room where I had left Tommy. Each time he had been lying with his head back and his mouth wide open, snoring. I would have liked to get him up to bed, but I daren't risk waking him.

The last time I went to look at him it was turned midnight. People were moving back and forth between the hall and the dining room, weaving about the floor with glasses and bits of cold chicken in their hands. Falzon was leaning against an open window, looking out into the night and smoking. I could not see Diana.

I opened the door of the little sitting room and peeped in. Tommy had gone. I picked up my skirts and ran upstairs. He was not in his dressing room; he was not in the bedroom. I hunted all over the first floor. He was not in anybody else's bedroom. The Marquise, I discovered in passing, was in her own.

Downstairs, Falzon was still staring out into the night, lounging there alone with his arm on the sill. Diana was not in the hall. She was not in the dining room: only the Vice-Consul and Marcopoli were there, diligently cleaning up the basket-work of a turkey. Diana was not out on the terrace.

There was a half-moon. It was light enough to see about the garden, except in the shadows of the cypresses. But her light costume and pale skin would have shown up even under the trees. It seemed to me so urgently necessary to find either her or Tommy that I shot about that garden like a terrier that's just lost a rat; and I cursed that Arab nightgown from hem to neckband when I tripped over the borders and tangled myself up in the rose bed.

Of course, it was no use looking for her in the garden. I ought to have thought of that at once. There could be only one rendezvous, and I had probably given Falzon time to join her there. I struck across to the little path leading up by the side of the stream to the pool. I lost one sandal and took the other off and stumbled along on my bare feet.

I don't think I had any clear idea of the propriety of what I was doing. When I reached the little hollow and saw the pool and its sand white in the moonlight before me, and the grey shape

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of the old temple stones just emerging from the black shadow of the olives, and the pinewood lifting a shimmer of moonlit needles above profound secrecies on the hill behind, just there I stopped and asked myself why the devil I should spy on the amours of a woman I'd seen for the first time only a week before. The answer frightened me. It was my business to prevent a murder.

She was there. She was standing on the sand at the edge of the pool, quite still, listening, turning her head towards the way I had come. Perhaps she had heard me. I had come up in the shadow of the overhanging rocks, and I stopped under them where the little hollow opened out and wrapped my dark *aba* round me so that I was invisible ; but she and the pool and the sward and the corner of the ruin behind her were lit by the moonshine.

Beyond me, on the slope of the hill, the other upstanding rocks threw profound shadows. I thought I heard something moving there, making a slight rattling among the stones. Diana paid it no heed ; all her attention was fixed on the path up which Falzon must come, past where I stood. I could not take my eyes off her. There, in that setting, she achieved the perfection she had just missed in the electric lights of the house. She had left her bow and quiver behind ; now, bending a little, her graceful body, hardly veiled at all by that filmy dress, held as though ready to spring and start away in flight or play, with the silvery blue wink of the water behind her and the moonlit grass and the grey temple stones, she was a nymph of the mountain. Falzon had produced his little play very well.

He had it all : plot, character, costume, setting, suspense—and surprise. While she waited, listening for his approach by the path, he stepped silently from the shadows of the temple behind her. He stood a moment, gazing at her. I could not well see his face, but his attitude was eloquent. Then, while still she had not heard him, he began a dancing approach to her—a queer, half solemn, half menacing dance across the grass. He made no sound at all and she was utterly unaware of him.

As he came nearer and I saw him a little more distinctly, I was astounded at the art of his costume. In the house it had been effective enough, but here, in the deceptive light for which he had designed it, the illusion was complete. In that pale, uncertain light where colours fled and shadows were deeper, he seemed a rougher, harder creature, all grey and tawny, muscular and wild. That shaggy hair about his loins and thighs seemed to grow naturally there ; his lower legs looked thin, and in his posturing dance he bent them in such a way I imagined I could see the animal hocks of the half-goat Pan ; I could have sworn that the feet that silently trod the grass were goat-feet.

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I had seen Falzon's cleverness; I had not suspected such art in him. His dance must have held anyone spellbound; and, strangest of all, it was a dance of pure exultation, desire itself exulting at the gateway of gratification, for she was unaware of him, and the dancer was aware of no one but Diana.

Then he touched her, and with a little cry she wheeled. She was in his arms. There was another cry, whether his or hers I don't know. It had no recognizable individuality; it seemed scarcely to come from a human throat.

A rattle of stones among the shadows on the hillside near me distracted my attention from them for a moment. When, having failed to make out what was moving under those rocks, I looked back to Diana and Falzon, I saw that she was struggling. For a second I thought it was play, then I heard her gasping with terror and fighting to break free from him. It was the briefest of struggles; before I could move he had thrown her and she sprawled helplessly on the sand, the breath knocked out of her, a pearl-pale body, stripped and prone at his feet. The moonlight fell on his upturned face for a second as, with a jerk of his arm, he threw the wisp of white dress aside; I saw the silver light glint on his little horns, I saw the gleam of his teeth and the shadow beneath his chin—black, like a beard. He threw his arm wide from his broad, hairy breast and laughed.

Out of the corner of my eye I caught a brief spurt of flame from the rocks to my left; a loud report made that little hollow ring like an empty room. The exultant figure by the pool bent, cringing and clasping its arms round itself, and it began to cry.

It turned and tried to run back across the grass, going with lurching little rushes and screaming like a hurt child. It's odd how unimportant and irrelevant Tommy and his wife suddenly became: even though Tommy, reeling out of the shadows, fired twice more across the little meadow, and Diana began to crawl towards him: the grey and tawny creature trying to reach the wood, crying with pain, had nothing to do any more with these.

It gained the shadow of the wood. I must have stood still there, staring after it for some time, because I remember its cries dying farther and farther away up the hillside among the pines.

I heard some of the others running up the path from the garden. Tommy was standing stock still on the grass, deathly pale, looking down at his wife and holding an automatic pistol in his hand. The Vice-Consul arrived and seemed to take it all in in a second. One look at Tommy's eyes was enough: he was stark mad. But he let us take the gun from him quietly enough. Diana wasn't touched; I picked her up and wrapped my *aba* round her before the others came up. It was Falzon he shot at I told the Vice-Consul.

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" Falzon ? " he said. " Impossible ! Falzon's in the house."

George Stavroulou and some of the servants took charge of Tommy, and the ash-blonde, who came up with Leon and was remarkably level-headed about it all, looked after Diana. The Vice-Consul and I went off ahead of them down the path. Halfway to the house we met Yves Falzon, coming skulking up and looking about as bold now as a pie-dog caught in a narrow alley.

" You'd better keep out of the way," says the Vice-Consul. " Lobeck's had three cracks at his missis and missed. If he gets another gun, maybe he won't miss you. Best thing you can do is to get down to that yacht as fast as you can go."

Falzon understood and did as he was told. He and the captain and the young officer were down at Naupaktos before dawn.

Uncle Bentham spent some time poking in his pipe with the end of a match. He lit it again and puffed for a while.

" Tommy died in Athens," he said. " Diana and the Marquise stayed with him while he lived. It wasn't long. The doctors said it was that old head wound. I never heard what became of Diana : she went off to her people in Paris, I believe. There was some gossip about the affair in Patras, but, after all, you know, he wasn't the first jealous husband who's tried to shoot his wife."

I looked at him. " Well, no. What more banal ? "

I saw that I had missed the train I was intending to catch. In fact, I should have to hurry to get the last one. I jumped up.

" Thanks for the good dinner, Uncle," I said. " And for the story. You only slipped up on one thing. You said you didn't get drunk at that party, but it couldn't have been the salted almonds that made you see what you saw."

Uncle Bentham got up, too. He paused on the way to the gate.

" No," he said. " As soon as it was light that morning I went back by myself to the pool. My notions of that sort of thing were amateurish, but I found the trail : first on the grass, then among the ruins of the temple. I even managed to follow it right up through the wood. Then, on the mountain top it was easier to see the splashes of blood across the rocks. I followed them all down the long slope, over the grey stones, among the spikes of asphodel. It was pitiful to see how far they went. They stopped at the cliff. The mountain falls sheer away there down into the Gulf of Corinth."

* * *

COLD STORAGE

Politicians keep their promises : they file them away for future reference.

G. K. CHESTERTON

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★*The American crime-story, slick, fast-moving and neatly handled, is one of the most specialized—and most exacting—of all short story forms, and this month* ARGOSY *has pleasure in introducing an unknown story by a favourite exponent. Dashiell Hammett was included amongst the nine "best mystery writers of all time" in a recent American Gallup Poll, the remaining eight winners in this "Whodunit Derby" being Erle Stanley Gardner, A. Conan Doyle, Ellery Queen, Edgar Allan Poe, Agatha Christie, S. S. Van Dine, Mary Roberts Rinehart and Rex Stout.*

THE MAN WHO STOOD IN THE WAY

by DASHIELL HAMMETT

THE Senator kept biting his lip, as if he were beset with problems of insurmountable difficulty. He was a massive man, exuding an air of power. The spacious leather chair in which he sat seemed scarcely adequate for his weight; bulky shoulders and arms bulged over its sides with a suggestion of overflowing.

The Senator's head under his crisp mane of iron-grey hair was massive, too, and his features were large, cragged, and graven with the lines that indicate power.

When he arose presently and crossed the library to get whisky and cigars for his guest, the immense room seemed to dwindle in an abrupt shrinking of wall and ceiling; and the polished floor threatened each instant to creak under the tread of his heavy feet, though it was far too genteel—as befitted a floor in a Dupont Circle home—ever actually to creak. The vacated chair gaped wide, appeared, as the great upholstered cavern it really was, to lose its dignity immediately the Senator dropped into it again.

In marked contrast with the Senator was the man who sat stiffly upright on the edge of one of the room's least comfortable chairs and, ignoring the allure of the imported cigars his host had set at his elbow, employed a gnarled thumb to cram coarse, black tobacco into a yellow-grey corn-cob pipe.

He looked sixty-five, though he may have been ten years younger, and the years had served to parch rather than to mellow him. His unkempt hair, to the extent that it had survived, was a dingy yellow-white which had probably been sandy in its youth;

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a moustache of the same hue, except where tobacco had stained it a richer shade, straggled over withered lips. His forehead was low, narrow, and of an almost reptilian flatness; his nose was long and pinched and drooping, below flat, lustreless eyes of a faded, unrecognizable colour; his chin was frankly receding.

In his thick-soled boots he would have stood less than five and a half feet—say, just a trifle above the Senator's shoulder—and the beam of scales set at a hundred and five pounds would have been undisturbed by his presence. He wore a baggy suit of a once-snuff colour, and a soft black hat lay on the floor beside his chair.

The pipe loaded, he turned to the table, filled a glass from the bottle, and drained it with neither the shudder nor the appreciative grimace which usually accompanies the drinking of straight whisky. Then, disregarding the matches on the stand beside him, he felt in his pockets and brought out one of his own, ignited it splutteringly on the sole of a boot, and lit his pipe.

His glance never for an instant rested on any of the furnishings of the luxurious room; it ranged from the Senator to the pipe, to the hat on the floor occasionally, and then back again to the Senator.

Obviously unused to the elegance in which he now found himself, that little man was not comfortable, not at home; but his attitude was certainly not one of awe—rather he seemed to disapprove of the sybaritic apartment and, disapproving, to ignore it altogether.

The Senator chewed a cigar, frowned at his feet, and talked. He was counted in political circles a reticent man, one who expressed himself crisply and concisely, with a great economy of words. But his conversation now was at variance with that reputation.

He talked desultorily, letting his sentences lose themselves half formed, their logical endings being replaced by irrelevancies or not at all. The little man answered now and then with drawled monosyllables in a dry, reedy voice; he was plainly not engrossed by his host's words and it was clear that the Senator had not sent for him to discuss crops and the political situation in Sudlow County.

The Senator wasted three-quarters of an hour in this nervous dalliance. Then he threw his cold cigar into the fireplace and slid his chair forward to within a foot of his guest's. He leaned still closer, the lines between his eyebrows deepening.

"But all this isn't what I wanted to see you for, Inch," he said, his deep voice impressive even in its half whisper. "I am in trouble. I need help."

Gene Inch nodded his head slightly.

"Can I count on you?" And then, as the meaningless nod came again, "You know I pardoned Tom when I was governor."

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It was true enough that the impetus behind that pardoning had been political expediency; but what of it? He had pardoned Tom Inch.

Gene Inch took the pipe from his mouth and said, "Yeah, I know you pardoned Tom. You don't have to remind a Inch of his debts."

"You'll help me, then?"

"Uh-huh. Who do you want killed?"

The Senator quailed.

"Killed?" he repeated in a tone of horror. "Killed?"

Inch bared his stained and broken teeth in an evil grin.

"I hope it ain't no worse than that," he said. "But supposing you tell me what's what."

The Senator laid an unsteady hand on the other's bony knee.

"I'm being blackmailed. It has been going on for years, since shortly after I came to Sudlow County. All the years I was in the State legislature, when I was governor, and now since I have been senator, I have been paying—and paying more and more every year. And now—now I've got to stop it. Inch, I have made a lot of friends since I have been here in Washington, and they are talking of running me for President. But I can't go ahead unless I shake this blackmailer off. I *must* shake him off, or I am stopped! The more prominent I become, the more insolent he is—it strengthens his hand just that much more—and if I should be elected President of this country . . . I can't even try unless I get rid of him!"

Inch's face hadn't lighted up at mention of either the blackmailer or the Senator's presidential hopes, and his eyes were as void of fire as ever.

"Where'll I find this fellow?" he asked laconically.

"Wait, Gene," the Senator said. "We must be careful. There must be no scandal or my position will be even worse than now. I want you to fix it so he won't bother me, but I don't want anything done that will bring on worse trouble."

Inch let a shade of his contempt for this nicety show in the lift of his lips, and then he said:

"Well, I reckon you better tell me more about it, then."

The Senator's eyes narrowed. He spoke aloud, but more to himself than to his guest:

"I pardoned your boy Tom when he was serving life for killing Dick Haney . . . All right!

"I came to Sudlow County nearly twenty years ago, remember? Well, I came there after escaping from the California State prison at San Quentin. I got in a fight in Oakland one night and killed a man. I wasn't known in Oakland and I gave a false name when

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I was arrested. I took my real name again after I escaped—I don't know of anybody else who ever did it from there. I was sentenced to thirty years, but after a year and a half I escaped. About two years after I had settled in Sudlow County a man who had been in San Quentin with me recognized me.

"Frank McPhail was his name, but he goes by the name of Henry Bush now. I've been paying him every cent I could scrape together ever since."

Inch twisted the end of his long nose reflectively.

"Any chance of facing it out? I mean, can he prove anything?"

"The fingerprints—they are still on file at San Quentin."

"Do you reckon there's anybody in on it besides this Bush?"

The Senator shook his head.

"I am reasonably certain that he hasn't told anyone else"—bitterly—"or I should have heard from them, too."

"Where does this Bush live at? And what does he look like?"

"Wait, Gene!" the Senator pleaded. "You can't walk up and shoot him. He is well known here in Washington, and he is known to be a friend of mine—he has boasted enough of our intimacy! No matter how careful you are, if you kill him something would leak out, and I'd be worse off than I am now. And, besides, I can't stomach murder!"

Inch tweaked his nose thoughtfully again and focused his flat eyes on the dirty bowl of his pipe.

"What's the next nearest city to here?" he asked.

"Baltimore is only forty miles away."

"Do you reckon this Bush is known much in Baltimore?"

"I don't think he is. Why?"

Inch thrust the pipe into his pocket and picked up his hat.

"I'll see you tomorrow," he said.

The following evening Gene Inch called upon the Senator again. He stayed but a few minutes, talking to the Senator in the reception hall.

"You tell this Bush you want him to come see you tomorrow in Baltimore; that you'll be waiting for him in Room 411 at the Strand Hotel between ten and eleven at night; that he's to come right up to the room and not ask for you at the desk, because you ain't going to be registered under your own name. Can you make him swallow it?"

"I think so," the Senator said hesitantly, "but he'll be suspicious and come prepared for trouble. What are you going to do, Gene? You aren't going to—"

"You leave me be," Inch said querulously. "I'm going to

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fix this thing. Do as I tell you. It don't make no difference what he thinks, or how suspicious he is, get him over there and I'll get you out of your troubles."

The Senator's muscular hand shook as he opened the door for his caller; the skinny hand that pulled Inch's black hat down on his head was as steady as a Sudlow County boulder.

A dim light from the corridor entered Room 411 through the transom; through the closed window came a faint glow from the street lights; the two diluted the darkness in the room to an artificial, bluish twilight.

Gene Inch sat on a chair in a corner near the door, facing the door. He wore a suit of coarse, heavy underwear, which bulged in ill-fitting folds here and there over his angular figure.

Clamped between his teeth was the stem of a cold pipe; a battered and scratched revolver of heavy calibre hung from one hand. His bare feet were flat on the carpeted floor in an attitude of patient ease.

A clock somewhere struck ten. Twenty minutes passed. Then the knob of the unlocked door turned, the door opened, and a burly figure stood in the doorway. A black automatic pistol held high against the figure's chest pointed into the room.

The muzzle of Inch's revolver slid forward and nudged the side of the burly man. The latter's muscles jumped suddenly, but his feet did not move. Slowly his right hand opened and the automatic thudded dully on the floor.

Inch stepped back and said: "Come in and close the door behind you."

Then he motioned his captive to a chair and sat on the edge of the bed.

"You're Bush, I reckon."

"Yes, and if you think—"

"Shut your mouth and listen!"

Bush subsided before the menace in the reedy voice of this queer little man in ridiculous clothes who squinted wickedly at him in the dusk over the barrel of the enormous revolver.

"Take off your coat."

Bush obeyed.

"Throw it on the foot of the bed."

Bush hesitated. It might be possible to fling the coat at this old man's head and close with him. But, his eyes now accustomed to the dim light, he saw that the withered finger around the trigger held it back against the grip—the cocked hammer was restrained only by the pressure of the thumb. That pressure removed, the hammer would fall.

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Gently Bush tossed his coat to the bed. Inch went through the pockets with his left hand, removing everything. Then he threw the coat on the floor.

"Turn out your other pockets."

Bush emptied the pockets of his trousers and waistcoat: a knife, some keys, a few coins, a roll of paper money, a watch, a handkerchief.

"This suit is tailor-made, huh?" Inch said. "Then there had ought to be labels on the pants and vest as well as the coat. Take the knife and rip 'em all out. Give me your hat."

While the puzzled blackmailer—not yet suspecting his captor's intention—removed all the markings from his clothes, Inch examined the hat. No initials were in it.

"Put on your coat and hat," he ordered. "Now put all them things back in your pockets except the money and your watch. You can drop the labels on the floor. Now stand back against the wall."

Inch picked up the money and put it in the pocket of his trousers, which hung over the back of a chair. The watch, the cloth labels, and the things he had taken from Bush's coat he rolled in a handkerchief and put in his ancient valise.

"Say—" Bush began.

"Shut your mouth!" Inch snapped irritably, shaking his revolver at the blackmailer.

Then the old man looked carefully around the room and chuckled with sour satisfaction. He backed to the bed and pulled the bedclothes down with his free hand and got into the bed, the revolver still menacing the other. He pulled the white sheet up across his chest, half sitting, half lying against the pillows. Then slowly he drew the revolver back towards his body. The muzzle cleared the edge of the sheet and slid out of sight.

Bush's mouth hung slack, bewilderment filled his face. As the weapon disappeared beneath the bedclothes he contracted his leg muscles in the first move of a spring. Before he could bend his knees in the second movement the room shook with a heavy explosion. A smouldering hole appeared on the white surface of the sheet and grew rapidly larger. Bush toppled to the floor with blood seeping from a hole in his left breast. The room reeked with the blended odours of gunpowder and burning cloth.

Inch scrambled out of bed, took a flashlight and a home-made black mask from a dresser drawer, and dropped them beside the dead man. Then he kicked the automatic pistol, which lay near the door, over near one lifeless hand.

Fifteen minutes later the hotel detective and a policeman were examining the remains of Henry Bush, and listening to Gene Inch's

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story of retiring early, waking to see a man bending over the chair on which his clothes hung, carefully drawing his revolver from under the pillow, being surprised in that act by the burglar, and having to shoot through the bedclothes.

The detective and the patrolman finished their examination and conferred.

"Nothing to identify him by."

"No; not even a watch or anything we could trace."

"No use trying to trace the gun. Burglars don't get 'em that way."

The policeman turned to Inch.

"Come down to headquarters in the morning—about ten o'clock."

And then, admiringly: "You sure hit him pretty for having to shoot through them bedclothes!"

"The Senator is not in," said the girl in the outer office.

"Now, sister, you tell him Gene Inch wants to see him."

"But he—"

"Run along and tell him, sister."

The Senator came to the door of his private office to receive Inch and to usher him in. The Senator's face was pallid and he seemed to be having trouble with his breathing. The eyes that met Inch's held a strange mixture of hope and fear.

When they were alone in the private office, Inch nodded with cool assurance.

"It's all done. Everything is all right."

"And he—"

"I seen by the papers where an unidentified burglar was killed trying to rob a farmer in a Baltimore hotel."

The Senator relaxed into a chair with a sobbing intake of breath.

"Are you positive, Gene, that there can be no slip-up?"

Inch chuckled scornfully.

"Ain't nothing can happen."

The Senator got to his feet and stretched out both hands to his saviour.

"I can't ever pay you in full for what you have done, Gene, but no matter—"

Inch turned his rounded back upon the other's gratitude and walked to the door. With one hand on the knob he turned, leered malevolently at the Senator, and said:

"I'll expect a cheque on the first of every month; and I hope you get to be President—it'll mean a lot to me."

For a long space the Senator stood staring dumbly into the little

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man's flat, lifeless eyes. Then comprehension came to him. His knees sagged and he crumpled into his chair.

" But, Gene—"

" *But* hell ! " Inch snarled. " The first of every month ! "

* * *

CAUTIONARY TALE

One day a thief went to rob the house of a rich merchant, and he climbed up the wall to an upper window. When he grabbed hold of the frame of the window it came away from the wall in his hand, and he fell and broke his leg. He brought an action for damages against the merchant, and said to the judge : " I went to rob the house of this rich man, but when I climbed up the wall and held on to the window it came away from its fastening, and I fell and broke my leg. I now claim compensation against the owner of the house for the badly-fitted window." The judge asked the merchant what he had to say in defence . . . The merchant explained that it was not his fault as he did not fix the window, and this was the work of the carpenter.

So the judge sent the police out, and the carpenter was arrested. The carpenter, however, said there was nothing wrong with the window itself, but it had been badly fitted by the mason. Then the mason was brought before the court and charged with the crime.

" *Wallahi*," he said, " it is not my fault. While I was fitting the window into the wall a pretty girl passed wearing a dress dyed a most beautiful colour. This distracted my attention, and through that the window was not securely fastened to the wall." So the girl was sought out by the police and brought to the Court, but she explained that it was not her own beauty which had upset the mason, but that of her dress, which had been dyed a special colour by the dyer.

When the dyer was put in the dock he had nothing to say, except that he had no idea the dyeing of the dress would have this effect. " You are guilty," said the judge, and turning to the police, " Go, take him to his shop, and hang him in his own doorway."

It seemed that at last justice had been done and the case settled satisfactorily, but suddenly the police came back to the court-room. The dyer, they said, was a tall man, and the doorway of the shop low, and they could not hang him there. " Go," said the judge sternly, " and find a shorter dyer who will fit the doorway, and hang him."

Arabian folk tale retold by C. S. JARVIS in
Happy Yesterdays

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NO STRINGS ATTACHED

Natural as natural, and secrecy guaranteed —it seemed too good to be true

by RAY BRADBURY

THEY walked slowly down the street at about ten in the evening, talking calmly. They were both about thirty-five, both eminently sober.

"But why so early?" said Smith.

"Because," said Braling.

"Your first night out in years and you go home at ten o'clock."

"Nerves, I suppose."

"What I wonder is how you ever managed it. I've been trying to get you out for ten years for a quiet drink. And now, on the one night, you insist on turning in early."

"Mustn't strain my luck too far," said Braling.

"What did you do, put sleeping powder in your wife's coffee?"

"No, that would be unethical. You'll see soon enough."

They turned a corner. "Honestly, Braling, I hate to say this, but you *have* been patient with her. You may not admit it to me, but marriage has been awful for you, hasn't it?"

"I wouldn't say that."

"It's got around, anyway, here and there, how she got you to marry her. That time back in 1979 when you were going to Tahiti—"

"Dear Tahiti. I never *did* see it after all my plans."

"And how she tore her clothes and rumpled her hair and threatened to call the police unless you married her."

"She always was nervous, Smith, understand."

"It was more than unfair. You didn't love her. You told her as much, didn't you?"

"I recall that I was quite firm on the subject."

"But you married her anyhow."

"I had my business to think of, as well as my mother and father. A thing like that would have killed them."

"And it's been ten years."

"Yes," said Braling, his grey eyes steady. "But I think perhaps it might change now. I think what I've waited for has come about. Look here."

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He drew forth a long blue ticket.

" Why, it's a ticket for Tahiti on the Thursday rocket ! "

" Yes, I'm finally going to make it."

" But how wonderful ! You *do* deserve it ! But won't *she* object ? Cause trouble ? "

Braling smiled nervously. " She won't know I'm gone. I'll be back in a month and no one the wiser, except you."

Smith sighed. " I wish I were going with you."

" Poor Smith, *your* marriage hasn't exactly been roses, has it ? "

" Not exactly, married to a woman who overdoes it. I mean, after all, when you've been married ten years, you don't expect a woman to sit on your lap for two hours every evening, 'phone you at work twelve times a day and talk baby talk. And it seems to me that in the last month she's got worse. I wonder if perhaps she isn't just a little simple-minded ? "

" Ah, Smith, always the conservative. Well, here's my house. Now, would you like to know my secret ? How I managed to come this evening ? "

" Will you really tell ? "

" Look up there ! " said Braling.

They both stared up through the dark air.

In the window above them, on the second floor, a curtain was pulled aside. A man about thirty-five years old, with a touch of grey at either temple, sad grey eyes, and a small thin moustache looked down at them.

" Why, that's *you !* " cried Smith.

" Sh-h-h, not so loud ! " Braling waved upward. The man in the window gestured significantly and vanished.

" I must be insane," said Smith.

" Hold on a moment."

They waited.

The front door opened and the tall spare gentleman with the moustache and the grieved eyes came out to meet them.

" Hello, Braling," he said.

" Hello, Braling," said Braling.

They were identical.

Smith stared. " Is this your twin brother ? I never knew—"

" No, no," said Braling quietly. " Bend close. Put your ear to Braling Two's chest."

Smith hesitated and then leaned forward to place his head against the uncomplaining ribs.

Tick-tick-tick-tick-tick-tick-tick-tick.

" Oh no ! It *can't* be ! "

" It is."

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" Let me listen again."

Tick-tick-tick-tick-tick-tick-tick-tick.

Smith staggered back and fluttered his eyelids, appalled. He reached out and touched the warm hands and the cheeks of the thing.

" Where'd you get him ? "

" Isn't he excellently fashioned ? "

" Incredible. Where ? "

" Give the man your card, Braling Two."

Braling Two did a magic trick and produced a white card :

MARIONETTES LIMITED

Duplicate self or friends ; new humanoid plastic 1990 *models, guaranteed against all physical wear. From* £2,000 *to our* £5,000 *de luxe model.*

" No," said Smith.

" Yes," said Braling.

" Naturally," said Braling Two.

" How long has this gone on ? "

" I've had him for a month. I keep him in the cellar in a tool box. My wife never goes downstairs, and I have the only lock and key to that box. Tonight I said I wished to take a walk to buy a cigar. I went down to the cellar and took Braling Two out of his box and sent him back up to sit with my wife while I came on out to see you, Smith."

" Wonderful ! He even *smells* like you : Bond Street and Melachrinos ! "

" It may be splitting hairs, but I think it highly ethical. After all, what my wife wants most of all is *me.* This marionette *is* me to the hairiest detail. I've been at home all evening. I shall be home with her for the next month. In the meantime another gentleman will be in Tahiti after ten years of waiting. When I return from Tahiti, Braling Two here will go back in his box."

Smith thought that over a minute or two. " Will he walk around without sustenance for a month ? " he finally asked.

" For six months if necessary. And he's built to do everything —eat, sleep, perspire—everything, natural as natural is. You'll take good care of my wife, won't you, Braling Two ? "

" Your wife is rather nice," said Braling Two. " I've grown rather fond of her."

Smith was beginning to tremble. " How long has Marionettes Limited been in business ? "

" Secretly, for two years."

" Could I—I mean, is there a possibility—" Smith took his friend's elbow earnestly. " Can you tell me where I can get one, a

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robot, a marionette, for myself? You *will* give me the address, won't you?"

"Here you are."

Smith took the card and turned it round and round. "Thank you," he said. "You don't know what this means. Just a little respite. A night or so, once a month even. My wife loves me so much she can't bear to have me gone an hour. I love her dearly, you know, but remember the old poem: '*Love will fly if held too lightly, love will die if held too tightly.*' I just want her to relax her grip a little bit."

"You're lucky, at least, that your wife loves you. Hate's my problem. Not so easy."

"Oh, Nettie loves me madly. It will be my task to make her love me comfortably."

"Good luck to you, Smith. Do drop around while I'm in Tahiti. It will seem strange, if you suddenly stop calling, to my wife. You're to treat Braling Two, here, just like me."

"Right! Good-bye. And thank you."

Smith went smiling down the street. Braling and Braling Two turned and walked into the hall.

On the bus Smith whistled softly, turning the white card in his fingers:

Clients must be pledged to secrecy, for while an act is pending to legalize Marionettes Limited, it is still a felony, if caught, to use one.

"Well," said Smith.

Clients must have a mould made of their body and a colour index check of their eyes, lips, hair, skin, etc. Clients must expect to wait for two months until their model is finished.

Not so long, thought Smith. Two months from now my ribs will have a chance to mend from the crushing they've taken. Two months from now my hand will heal from being so constantly held. Two months from now my bruised underlip will begin to reshape itself. I don't mean to sound *ungrateful* . . . He flipped the card over.

Marionettes Limited is two years old and has a fine record of satisfied customers behind it. Our motto is "No Strings Attached." Address: 43 South Wesley Drive.

The bus pulled to his stop; he alighted, and while humming up the stairs he thought, Nettie and I have five thousand in our joint bank account. I'll just slip two thousand out as a business venture, you might say. The marionette will probably pay back my money,

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with interest, in many ways. Nettie needn't know. He unlocked the door and in a minute was in the bedroom. There lay Nettie, pale, huge, and piously asleep.

" Dear Nettie." He was almost overwhelmed with remorse at her innocent face there in the semi-darkness. " If you were awake you would smother me with kisses and coo in my ear. Really, you make me feel like a criminal. You have been such a good, loving wife. Sometimes it is impossible for me to believe you married me instead of that Alf Chapman you once liked. It seems that in the last month you have loved me more wildly than *ever* before."

Tears came to his eyes. Suddenly he wished to kiss her, confess his love, tear up the card, forget the whole business. But as he moved to do this, his hand ached and his ribs cracked and groaned. He stopped, with a pained look in his eyes, and turned away. He moved out into the hall and through the dark rooms. Humming, he opened the kidney desk in the library and drew out the bankbook. " I'll just take two thousand pounds," he said. " No more than that." He stopped. " Wait a minute."

He rechecked the bankbook frantically. " Hold on here ! " he cried. " Four thousand pounds missing ! " He leaped up. " There's only one thousand left ! What's she done ? What's Nettie done with it ? More hats, more clothes, more perfume ! Or, wait—I know ! She bought that little house she's been talking about for months, without so much as a by your leave ! "

He stormed into the bedroom, righteous and indignant. What did she mean, taking their money like this ? He bent over her. " Nettie ! " he shouted. " Nettie, wake up ! "

She did not stir. " What've you done with my money ! " he bellowed.

She stirred fitfully. The light from the street flushed over her beautiful cheeks.

There was something about her. His heart throbbed violently. His tongue dried. He shivered. His knees suddenly turned to water. He collapsed. " Nettie, Nettie ! " he cried. " What've you done with my money ! "

And then, the horrid thought. And then the terror and the loneliness engulfed him. And then the fever and disillusionment. For, without desiring to do so, he bent forward and yet forward again until his fevered ear was resting firmly and irrevocably upon her round pink bosom. " Nettie ! " he cried.

Tick-tick-tick-tick-tick-tick-tick-tick-tick-tick-tick.

As Smith walked away down the street in the night, Braling and Braling Two turned in at the front door. " I'm glad he'll be happy too," said Braling.

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" Yes," said Braling Two abstractedly.

" Well, it's the cellar box for you, B-Two." Braling guided the other creature's elbow down the stairs to the cellar.

" That's what I want to talk to you about," said Braling Two, as they reached the concrete floor and walked across it. " The cellar. I don't like it. I don't like that tool box."

" I'll try and fix up something more comfortable."

" Marionettes are made to move, not lie still. How would you like to lie in a box most of the time ? "

" Well—"

" You wouldn't like it at all. I keep running. There's no way of shutting me off. I'm perfectly alive and I have feelings."

" It'll only be a few days now. I'll be off to Tahiti and you won't have to stay in the box. You can live upstairs."

Braling Two gestured irritably. " And when you come back from having a good time, back in the box I go."

Braling said, " They didn't tell me at the marionette shop that I'd get a difficult specimen."

" There's a lot they don't know about us," said Braling Two. " We're pretty new. And we're sensitive. I hate the idea of you going off and laughing and lying in the sun in Tahiti while we're stuck here in the cold."

" But I've wanted that trip all my life," said Braling quietly.

He squinted his eyes and could see the sea and the mountains and the yellow sand. The sound of the waves was good to his inward mind. The sun was fine on his bared shoulders. The wine was most excellent.

" *I'll* never get to go to Tahiti," said the other man. " Have you thought of that ? "

" No, I—"

" And another thing. Your wife."

" What about her ? " asked Braling, beginning to edge towards the door.

" I've grown quite fond of her."

" I'm glad you're enjoying your employment." Braling licked his lips nervously.

" I'm afraid you don't understand. I think—I'm in love with her."

Braling took another step and froze. " You're *what ?* "

" And I've been thinking," said Braling Two, " how nice it is in Tahiti and how I'll never get there, and I've thought about your wife and—I think we could be very happy."

" T-that's nice." Braling strolled as casually as he could to the cellar door. " You won't mind waiting a moment, will you ? I have to make a 'phone call."

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" To whom ? " Braling Two frowned.

" No one important."

" To Marionettes Limited ? To tell them to come and get me ? "

" No, no—nothing like that ! " He tried to rush out of the door. A metal-firm grip seized his wrists. " Don't run ! "

" Take your hands off ! "

" No."

" Did my wife put you up to this ? "

" No."

" Did she guess ? Did she talk to you ? Does she know ? Is *that* it ? " He screamed. A hand clapped over his mouth.

" You'll never know, will you ? " Braling Two smiled delicately. " You'll never know."

Braling struggled. " She *must* have guessed ; she *must* have affected you ! "

Braling Two said, " I'm going to put you in the box, lock it, and lose the key. Then I'll buy another Tahiti ticket for your wife."

" Now, now, wait a minute. Hold on. Don't be rash. Let's talk this over ! "

" Good-bye, Braling."

Braling stiffened. " What do you mean ' good-bye ' ? "

Ten minutes later Mrs. Braling awoke. She put her hand to her cheek. Someone had just kissed it. She shivered and looked up. " Why—you haven't done that in years," she murmured.

" We'll see what we can do about that," someone said.

* * *

DOUBLE EXPOSURE

A friend of mine in the island of Guernsey one day settled down in a small, deserted bay to read, hidden behind a sand dune. Presently two young girls came along and seeing no-one, undressed and stretched out to sun-bathe. Soon a parson appeared carrying a camera, and believing himself alone, left his clothes on the beach and swam around the neighbouring headland.

Out from behind their sand dune stole the two girls to where the parson's clothes lay, picked up his camera and each snapped a picture of the other. After which they replaced the camera containing these candid portraits and returned to their hiding place.

VISCOUNTESS RHONDDA, *Notes On The Way*

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A MATCH FOR LORD STRAFFORD

" Money is a beautiful dowry," said Plautus—and Lady Wentworth, proud and doting mother of " the dearist and best of children," would have been the first to agree. The letters to her son, Lord Raby, later Earl of Strafford, were written whilst he was living in Berlin, first as envoy, then as Ambassador. Not the least of their charms is the delightful illiteracy, but Lady Wentworth's untiring match-making energy and unblushingly mercenary outlook are refreshing in their sheer vitality. Here she is, writing strictly to the point, on February 27th, 1706 :

In my last I told you that Lord Huntington was dead, I wish you had his sister, she is young and handsom ; she had left her by her father ten thousand pound, and six hundred a year by sum relation I thinck her grandmother, and now by the death of her brother six hundred a year more . . . I wish you had her insteed of Cosin Wentworth.

February 29th, 1706 :

My dearest dear and best child,—a thousan thancks to you for yours, short as it was, it was most hartely welcom, if but one lyne its much better than none. I will promis you to breack none of your chyney . . . I wish you had Lady Mary Haystins, she for certain has twelv hundred a year inherretanc and ten thoussand pound . . .

March 25th, 1706 :

I know noe reson why you doe not make intrest to gett the Duke of Newcastle's or Lord Carburer's daughters, indeed I lyke ether of them much better. If you gave out I was dead, and I will goe and hyde in some corner, then I am sure she would have you, for she has an avertion to a mother in law . . .

May 14th, 1707 :

Pray what is becom of the lady you told me of a month agoe, I fancy it was only a dreem or will proov noe better. I hear Sir Clously Shovell has left a daughter that will be a vast fortune ; pray make inqr after her, his son was drowned with him . . .

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February 10th, 1709:

My dearist and best of children,—Thear is thre sisters in law of neic Hanbury's, Lady Ascough's daughters, that will be worth 20,000 a peic, but the youngest of the thre my Lady will giv her ten thoussand more then the other twoe, soe she will be worth thirty thoussand pd.

She has a great deal of witt, but not very handsom, the second is the hansomist. The youngist was a great favorett of the son's soe senc his death she is soe of her mother's. It would rejoyce me to hear sum great fortune in your country was fallen in lov with you, and that you soe with her, and whye might not I then com and liv at your little country hous, and never appear but when you and your famely was at court and then only in the garden; twoe rooms would sarve me, Pug, Fubs and Puss. I forgett whilst I am pleesing my self I am troubling you, thearfore will only assure you that noe pen can expres how wel I love you and how much I am, dearist, dear creeture, your moste infenit affectionate mother.

December 20th, 1709:

I am very angree with Hall, for I sett him to inquier after a young lady that I writt you word how prety she was, that I se at chappell. I hard she was a fortune and Hall brought me word she would have very little during her father's life, and he was lykly to marry again. She is now going to be marred and has twenty thoussand pound sartain.

Hear is Lord Carburer's daughter and the duke of Newcastle's yett left for you. Its noe shame for a man to be refused, whye should you not write a letter to Lord Carburer to propose youself to his daughter, and assure him you will desier nothing of her fortune tell he is dead. He is vastly ritch and will giv all he has to her, only is soe covetious he will part with nothing present; he is very old and will never marry again . . .

March 18th, 1710:

My dearist and best of children . . . I hope you will not lett one post slip without a letter to Lady B. and her daughter; in my own immagenation I doe conclewd it dun, if it be not your fault, delay in such affairs loocks ill and seldom prospers . . .

Just now the Lady Raby that would be soe was to see me, she goes to morroe into the country, but I own I lyke this last much better. God grant this last may be soe and make you as happy as ever man upon earth was . . . One great happynes, they are all modist vertious young wemen.

I hear send you a paper to make you laugh. Dear Dear Creature I am your most infenitt affectionate mother.

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Midsummer Day, 1710:

My dearist and best of children, Hear was a lady the other day that has thre prety daughters, and her favoret she made stand under your Picture you brought from Prutia, and said she never see twoe facis more alyke. Indeed the lady is very prety, but her face is thinner, the eys is very lyke. She did exspect I would have wisht her my daughter, but indeed I did not, for she has noe fortune consederable.

July 13th, 1710:

My dearist and best of children,—senc I came hear I have been much out of order in my head . . . I have gott a vast stomak.

I am fallen in lov with Lady Humble, the more you know her the better you lyke her. I lyke her better than Lady Effingham or Lady Betty Hastins, she is not a buity but very fyne skinn, only her face is taned . . . and they say is worth at leest ten thoussand pd. If I was a man I would have her before som with thirty . . .

She is young enough to have children, she is soe good a huswife she will duble her fortune by good manadgement; her conversation is worth a great deel. Lady Clark ses none is fit for you but the Duke of Newcastle's daughter.

Lady Tufton has buiryed this last Sunday one of her daughters but has five handsom ons left. For five thoussand pd you may by her hous, and one or twoe may be bated if you will take a daughter . . .

August 7th, 1710:

I wish you would inquier about this Sir William or Sir Robert, I forget whitch, Trotman's daughter; al say she is a vast fortune but very ugly; her freench woman has a sister in Barlin . . .

October 6th, 1710:

Pray my dear, why will you let Lady Mary thin (Thynne) goe, she is yoang, ritch, and not unhandsom, som sey she is prety; and a vertious lady, and of the nobillety, and why will you not trye to gett her. Its said Lord Villors Lady was worth fower scoar thoussand pd . . .

Dear soul, I hope God has a blessing yet in stoar for you . . .

Readers will no doubt be relieved to learn that the "blessing yet in stoar" actually materialised in the following year, 1711, when Lady Wentworth's son (we are sorry to say without her help) married Anne, only daughter and heiress of Sir Henry Johnson, a wealthy shipbuilder. She brought him £60,000 and expectations!

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SCENARIO

I would have been elated had I not known that my troubles were only just beginning

by JOHN GALSWORTHY

IN these days no man of genius need starve. The following story of my friend Bruce may be taken as proof of this assertion. Nearly sixty when I first knew him, he must have written already some fifteen books, which had earned him the reputation of "a genius" with the few who knew. He used to live in York Street, Adelphi, where he had two rooms up the very shaky staircase of a house chiefly remarkable for the fact that its front door seemed always open. I suppose there never was a writer more indifferent to what people thought of him.

He was a tall, thin man, with a face rather like Mark Twain's, black eyebrows which bristled and shot up, a bitten drooping grey moustache, and fuzzy grey hair; but his eyes were like owl's eyes, piercing, melancholy, dark brown, and gave to his rugged face an extraordinary expression of a spirit remote from the flesh which had captured it. He was a bachelor, who seemed to avoid women; perhaps they had "learned" him that; for he must have been very attractive to them.

The year of which I write had been to my friend Bruce the devil, monetarily speaking. With his passion for writing that for which his Age had no taste—what could he expect? His last book had been a complete frost. He had undergone, too, an operation which had cost him much money and left him very weak. When I went to see him that October, I found him stretched out on two chairs, smoking the Brazilian cigarettes which he affected—and which always affected me, so black and strong they were, in their yellow maize-leaf coverings. He had a writing-pad on his knee, and sheets of paper scattered all around. The room had a very meagre look. I had not seen him for a year and more, but he looked up at me as if I'd been in yesterday.

"Hallo!" he said; "I went into a thing they call a cinema last night. Have you ever been?"

"Ever been? Do you know how long the cinema has been going? Since about 1900."

"Well! What a *thing!* I'm writing a skit on it!"

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"How—a skit?"

"Parody—wildest yarn you ever read."

He took up a sheet of paper and began chuckling to himself.

"My heroine," he said, "is an Octoroon. Her eyes swim, and her lovely bosom heaves. Everybody wants her, and she's more virtuous than words can say. The situations she doesn't succumb to would freeze your blood; they'd roast your marrow. She has a perfect devil of a brother, with whom she was brought up, and who knows her deep dark secret and wants to trade her off to a millionaire who also has a deep dark secret. Altogether there are four deep dark secrets in my yarn. It's a knock-out."

"What a waste of your time!" I said.

"My time!" he answered fiercely. "What's the use of my time? Nobody buys my books."

"Who's attending you?"

"Doctors! They take your money, that's all. I've got no money. Don't talk about me!" Again he took up a sheet of manuscript and chuckled.

"Last night—at that place—they had—good God!—a race between a train and a motor-car. Well, I've got one between a train, a motor-car, a flying machine, and a horse."

I sat up.

"May I have a look at your skit," I said, "when you've finished it?"

"It *is* finished. Wrote it straight off. D'you think I could stop and then go on again with a thing like that?" He gathered the sheets and held them out to me. "Take the thing—it's amused me to do it. The heroine's secret is that she isn't an Octoroon at all; she's a De La Casse—purest Creole blood of the South; and her villainous brother isn't her brother; and the bad millionaire isn't a millionaire; and her penniless lover is. It's rich, I tell you!"

"Thanks," I said drily, and took the sheets.

I went away concerned about my friend, his illness, and his poverty, especially his poverty, for I saw no end to it.

After dinner that evening I began languidly to read his skit. I had not read two pages of the thirty-five before I started up, sat down again, and feverishly read on. Skit! By George! He had written a perfect scenario—or, rather, that which wanted the merest professional touching-up to be perfect.

I was excited. It was a little gold-mine if properly handled. Any good film company, I felt convinced, would jump at it. Yes! But how to handle it? Bruce was such an unaccountable creature, such a wild old bird! Imagine his having only just realised the cinema! If I told him his skit was a serious film, he would say:

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" Good God ! " and put it in the fire, priceless though it was. And yet, how could I market it without *carte blanche*, and how get *carte blanche* without giving my discovery away ? I was terribly keen on getting some money for him ; and this thing, properly worked, might almost make him independent. I felt as if I had a priceless museum piece which a single stumble might shatter to fragments. The tone of his voice when he spoke of the cinema—" What a *thing !* "—kept coming back to me. He was prickly proud, too—very difficult about money.

Could I work it without telling him anything ? I knew he never looked at a newspaper. But should I be justified in taking advantage of that—in getting the thing accepted and produced without his knowing ? I revolved the question for hours, and went to see him again next day.

He was reading.

" Hallo ! You again ? What do you think of this theory—that the Egyptians derive from a Saharan civilization ? "

" I don't think," I said.

" It's nonsense. This fellow—"

I interrupted him.

" Do you want that skit back, or can I keep it ? "

" Skit ? What skit ? "

" The thing you gave me yesterday."

" That ! Light your fire with it. This fellow—"

" Yes," I said ; " I'll light a fire with it. I see you're busy."

" Oh, no ! I'm not," he said. " I've nothing to do. What's the good of my writing ? I earn less and less with every book that comes out. I'm dying of poverty."

" That's because you won't consider the public."

" *How* can I consider the public when I don't know what they want ? "

" Because you won't take the trouble to find out. If I suggested a way to you of pleasing the public and making money, you'd kick me out of the room."

And the words : " For instance, I've got a little gold-mine of yours in my pocket," were on the tip of my tongue, but I choked them back. " Daren't risk it ! " I thought. " He's given you the thing. *Carte blanche—cartes serrées !* "

I took the gold-mine away and promptly rough-shaped it for the film. It was perfectly easy, without any alteration of the story. Then I was faced with the temptation to put his name to it. The point was this : if I took it to a film company as an authorless scenario, I should only get authorless terms ; whereas, if I put his name to it, with a little talking I could double the terms at least. The film public didn't know his name, of course, but the inner

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literary public did, and it's wonderful how you can impress the market with the word " genius " judiciously used.

It was too dangerous, however; and at last I hit on a middle course. I would take it to them with no name attached, but tell them it was by " a genius", and suggest that they could make capital out of the incognito. I knew they would feel it *was* by a genius.

I took it to an excellent company next day, with a covering note saying: " The author, a man of recognized literary genius, for certain reasons prefers to remain unknown." They took a fortnight in which to rise, but they rose. They had to. The thing was too good in itself. For a week I played them over terms. Twice I delivered an ultimatum—twice they surrendered: they knew too well what they had got. I could have made a contract with £2,000 down which would have brought at least another £2,000 before the contract term closed; but I compounded for one that gave me £3,000 down, as likely to lead to less difficulty with Bruce. The terms were not a whit too good for what was really the " acme " of scenarios. If I could have been quite open, I could certainly have done better. Finally, however, I signed the contract, delivered the manuscript, and received a cheque for the price.

I was elated, and at the same time knew that my troubles were just beginning. With Bruce's feeling about the film, how the deuce should I get him to take the money? Could I go to his publishers, and conspire with them to trickle it out to him gradually, as if it came from his books? That meant letting them into the secret; besides, he was too used to receiving practically nothing from his books; it would lead him to make enquiry, and the secret was bound to come out. Could I get a lawyer to spring an inheritance on him? That would mean no end of lying and elaboration, even if a lawyer would consent. Should I send him the money in Bank of England notes, with the words: " From a lifelong admirer of your genius "? I was afraid he would suspect a trick, or stolen notes, and go to the police to trace them. Or should I just go, put the cheque on the table, and tell him the truth?

The question worried me terribly, for I didn't feel entitled to consult others who knew him. It was the sort of thing that, if talked over, would certainly leak out. It was not desirable, however, to delay cashing a big cheque like that. Besides, they had started on the production. It happened to be a slack time, with a dearth of good films, so that they were rushing it on.

And in the meantime there was Bruce—starved of everything he wanted, unable to get away for want of money, depressed about

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his health and his future. And yet so completely had he always seemed to me different, strange, superior to this civilisation of ours, that the idea of going to him and saying simply: "This is yours, for the film you wrote," scared me. I could hear his: "*I? Write for the cinema? What do you mean?*"

When I came to think of it, I had surely taken an extravagant liberty in marketing the thing without consulting him. I felt he would never forgive that, and my feeling towards him was so affectionate, even reverential, that I simply hated the idea of being cast out of his affections. At last I hit on a way that by introducing my own interest might break my fall. I cashed the cheque, lodged the money at my bank, drew my own cheque on it for the full amount, and armed with that and the contract, went to see him.

He was lying on two chairs, smoking his Brazilians, and playing with a stray cat which had attached itself to him. He seemed rather less prickly than usual, and after beating about the bushes of his health and other matters, I began:

"I've got a confession to make, Bruce."

"Confession!" he said. "What confession?"

"You remember that skit on the film you wrote, and gave me, about six weeks ago?"

"No."

"Yes, you do—about an Octoroon."

He chuckled. "Oh! Ah! That!"

I took a deep breath, and went on:

"Well, I sold it; and the price of course belongs to you."

"What? Who'd print a thing like that?"

"It isn't printed. It's being made into a film—a super-film, they call it."

His hand came to a pause on the cat's back, and he glared at me. I hastened on:

"I ought to have told you what I was doing, but you're so prickly, and you've got such confounded superior notions. I thought if I did, you'd be biting off your nose to spite your own face. The fact is, it made a marvellous scenario. Here's the contract, and here's a cheque on my bank for the price—£3,000. If you like to treat me as your agent, you owe me £300. I don't expect it, but I'm not proud, like you, and I shan't sneeze at it."

"Good God!" he said.

"Yes, I know. But it's all nonsense, Bruce. You can carry scruples to altogether too great length. Tainted source! Everything's tainted, if you come to that. The film's a quite justified expression of modern civilisation—a natural outcome of the Age. It gives amusement; it affords pleasure. It may be vulgar, it may be cheap, but we *are* vulgar, and we *are* cheap, and it's no use

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pretending we're not—not you, of course, Bruce, but people at large. A vulgar Age wants vulgar amusement, and if we can give it that amusement, we ought to; life's not too cheery, anyway."

The glare in his eyes was almost paralyzing me, but I managed to stammer on:

"You live out of the world—you don't realise what humdrum people want; something to balance the greyness, the—the banality of their lives. They want blood, thrill, sensation of all sorts. You didn't mean to give it them, but you have, you've done them a benefit, whether you wish to or not, and the money's yours and you've got to take it."

The cat suddenly jumped down. I waited for the storm to burst.

"I know," I dashed on, "that you hate and despise the cinema—"

Suddenly his voice boomed out:

"Bosh! What are you talking about? Cinema! I go there every other night."

It was my turn to say: "Good God!" And, ramming contract and cheque into his empty hand, I bolted, closely followed by the cat.

★*This story—as readers will probably agree—could well have been written yesterday, blood-freezing scenario and all! Actually John Galsworthy wrote it twenty-eight years ago, in the days of Pearl White thriller serials, Lilian and Dorothy Gish in "Orphans of the Storm", and Rudolph Valentino.*

* * *

SUCCÈS FOU

Of all devices for getting a railway carriage to yourself, mine is unfailing. I put my face close to the window, assume an expression of leering invitation and beckon to anyone approaching with a forefinger!

LESLIE BONNET

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LEGEND IN ADVANCE

"I knew 'em then, and I know 'em now," he said, "and then again I knew 'em"

by JOHN GLOAG

I HAD been walking along the cliffs from Morwenstow to the little inland village where I was staying near Northcott Mouth. The dazzling heat of the August afternoon had changed to a stuffy, oppressive evening with thunder in the air. It was rough walking: every few miles the cliff path dropped down into wooded coombes, rising again steeply through heather and wind-clipt gorse. After panting up to the top of the cliff above Duckpool I lay down on the salt-scented turf to rest. Below me a sea like lapis lazuli was frilled with foam where it met the sharp, black rocks with which the Atlantic coast of Cornwall is fanged. Northwards, twenty miles off, I could see Lundy with its tall cliffs matching those on the coast so exactly that it seemed as if some fragment of the mainland had broken off and drifted out to sea. When Lundy is visible it means that it's going to rain: when you can't see it, it *is* raining.

In the distance that pink and grey island had the magical invitation of a mirage: it seemed to promise seclusion and serenity. Once you were there, perhaps that promise was fulfilled; but getting there was the trouble. The day before, I had sailed across from Clovelly in a motor-boat. Although the sea seemed fairly smooth, its wildness when we reached the island made it impossible for us to land. A queer, forbidding place, Lundy, with its sullen cliffs, and the wreck of a big freighter jammed bow-on to Rat Island. All you can see are a few ruined cottages, a solitary, isolated church, and some lighthouses. The cliffs, continuously lashed by angry waves, are scarred and pitted with caverns.

As I lay half drowsing in the heat, and regretting that I hadn't landed on Lundy, I saw an old man toiling up the cliff path towards me. He was a doddering wreck of a man. He had been tall, but now he stooped and leaned heavily on a thick stick, and paused every few steps to shade his eyes with his left hand and to stroke his long white beard. His clothes were old and shabby, and on his head was something that looked like a large, brown muffin, some kind of a fur cap without a brim. I wondered why such an infirm

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creature should be tackling that steep path. He shuffled up and stood a couple of yards away, regarding me intently with sad, watery blue eyes. Then he shook his head and lowered himself gently on to the springy turf. I said good afternoon.

"Bad weather coming," he said, "yiss."

His voice seemed rusty and yet there was a rich quality in it, a pleasant voice, and he spoke with what I had come to recognize as a Devonshire accent, though reproduce it I cannot. He pointed towards Lundy, and told me what I already knew, about the clearness of the island and the promise of bad weather. And then, immediately, he plunged into a story about the island. He seemed to be musing aloud, talking to himself rather than to me. This was roughly what he said :—

"Just a few kind folks there were, lighthouse men mostly, and a few fishermen. There's pollack to be got under they cliffs. Plenty of good pasture up top, with hollows for the sheep, but never a tree—no, never a tree on Lundy."

I thought of the trees on that coast where Devon joins Cornwall, all leaning away to the north-east; fixed in one direction by the Atlantic gales that come shouting over the cliffs. No wonder trees couldn't thrive on Lundy. Even in the middle of the island they could never survive the gales.

"Kind folks," the old man went on, "and just a few of them. I knew 'em then, when I lived there, and I know 'em now, and then again I knew 'em. And this is what happened. When the troubles began, a few of 'em came off from Clovelly and Ilfracombe and Instow, and some of 'em couldn't land and some of 'em was drowned in trying; but they came off, a few at a time, and the good folk up to Lundy made 'em welcome. Poor dears, they were that scared and wretched, and cold and hungry, what else could the folks do? They'm always tending to wrecks, and in a manner of speaking, these folks that came off was shipwrecked. Aye, but the troubles were bad. But there was nothing to be done, and they just saved who they could and warned the boats off if it was too rough, though, poor dears, they wouldn't take any warning but they all tried to land, because they dared not go back again."

"Who?" I asked.

"The folks that came from Clovelly and Instow and Ilfracombe, boatloads of 'em", he answered. "It got so at last that the Lundy men were afeared for their lives. There wasn't much food on the island, just enough to keep a few souls going, and there was a mort of hungry mouths landed there, but we couldn't refuse the poor things. But one day, when we had seen smoke and flame rising all over these cliffs, and the towns in flames, and the big black birds in clouds looking at it all, the islanders had to say 'no' to

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the boats. Ah, it was pitiful, but it was 'no' to newcomers or death to all those on the island. None of 'em who came in boats brought any food, and there wasn't enough fish and mutton to go round, not by a long way."

He stopped and shook his head.

I was racking my brains to find some clue to the story he was telling me. I couldn't think of any exodus of people to Lundy that could have come within his lifetime, but maybe he was telling me some old story that his father or perhaps his grandfather had passed on. Surely he couldn't be thinking of the refugees from Monmouth's Rebellion? Even putting his age at ninety, it was too big a stretch over the centuries, although I knew how legends last four or five generations in the country, particularly among people who live near the sea.

"The day came," he went on presently, "when there was no more room and no more food, and the strangers, most of 'em, had to go. They kept the women and children, but the men went over the cliff. And every day, there were fresh boats coming over and people crying and shrieking to be let ashore, and the islanders had to fight 'em off with stones and rocks, stoving in their boats before they could land on the quay by Rat Island. They didn't mean to be cruel or hard, but they had to live, and whenever they saw the coast there was still fire and burning and the smoke from Clovelly and Bideford and Ilfracombe wagged at them like black fingers, warning them that the birds of death had taken the land."

There was something apocalyptic about that phrase, "the birds of death," and I wondered whether he was some ancient fanatical preacher. I rose rather hastily.

"Can I help you down the cliff?" I invited.

He shook his head. "Let me be," he said. "I like to be within sight of my home."

I left him gazing over the sea towards Lundy, which now looked like a purple cloud on the horizon, and walked back to my inn. Before turning in that night, I told the landlord about the old man on the cliff. He scratched his head, and seemed a little embarrassed, and then said, "That'll be old George, sir."

"Old George?"

"Yes. He's been dead the better part of seventy years. He was a rare one for smuggling, and he lived in Lundy, and ran his cargoes there. They do say he walks regular on the cliff between here and Morwenstow."

"Are you telling me," I said, "that I've been talking to a ghost?"

"Well, sir," he said, "some say there are ghosts and some

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say there aren't, but a good many folks have seen old George. He always talks to strangers. You see, the Preventive men got after him, and he couldn't live in Lundy any more, and he used to hide on this coast here, and when he was an old man he spent all his time looking at his home, where he dare not be found."

"Yes, that's all very well," I said, "I accept the ghost part of it, but what on earth was he telling me about?"

The landlord shook his head. "Well, y'know sir, I've never heard of him telling that tale before. He sometimes talks about smuggling, but you see, he was a queer one when he was alive, was old George. He could always see a bit that other men couldn't."

"What he seemed to be telling me," I said, "was about some disaster on the mainland here, that drove people over to Lundy."

The landlord looked troubled. "Yes, sir," he said, "that's it. Old George had second sight when he was alive, and he still seems to have it as a ghost. What he told you may be going to happen."

* * *

OLD FAMILIAR PLACES

Towered cities, golden villages, and islands sleeping in the sun—allow one point for knowing the place, one for the source, and one for the author in each case, making twenty-four in all. Answers on page 119.

1. *At an assembly in this small town the two sisters met their future husbands, though one of them would have hotly denied such a forecast at the time.*
2. *In this lovely hamlet they bathe by day and bathe by night, while the church clock has long ceased to tell the time . . .*
3. *An abrupt but kindly aunt took her young nephew to school in this old city, at the start of a new and better life.*
4. *They sang in time to the strokes of their oars as they approached this beautiful unknown island—to find a new home in a foreign land seems to have been as attractive a prospect then as now.*
5. *The cruelty of her father at their gloomy home in a little grey town eventually caused a fate considerably worse than death for the unfortunate girl.*
6. *This husband's horsemanship was not of the best, and he was carried far beyond his destination—his first holiday in twenty years, too!*
7. *In spite of a previously happy life on this West Indian island, the children endured with surprising equanimity their ill-fated voyage in the "Clorinda" and subsequent rescue by pirates.*
8. *"Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen," and all is sadness and desolation where once there was sport and gaiety.*

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SUSPICION

"Your wife is a witness," he said

by GIUSEPPE MAROTTA

THE *Vico Lungo Sant'Agostino degli Scalzi* is an alley between two rows of old buildings of forbidding aspect. The doors of the dim little cellar dwellings, swing in the March wind, and dark skinned children gather on the thresholds with the same centripetal urge that determines the formation of clusters of mussels in the fishpools of Santa Lucia. A blouse is hung up to dry in a window and from the top floor a basket is jerkily lowered on a rope. At this changeable season sunbeams and raindrops pour down alternately upon passers-by.

It was in March of a year whose number I cannot recall that the *Vico Lungo Sant'Agostino degli Scalzi* suffered and enjoyed the scandal of the emerald ring, which was unaccountably lost between one shower and another, between the yes and no of the fickle spring sky, by Donna Sofia Pugliese. Where the devil could the mysterious ring have gone ? Was it in the *pizza* or wasn't it ? That was the question. But let us first consider the figure of Don Rosario Pugliese, both as a merchant and as a man.

Early every Thursday and Saturday morning Don Rosario Pugliese appeared at the door of his cellar with a portable oven in his arms, which after a graceful flexion of his tubby body he deposited on a spot of uneven pavement. Meanwhile, from the next cellar, his wife's white arms held out a low table covered by a slightly less white cloth. A large pie dish, a cruet of oil, a basket of *Ricotta* cheese, salt and pepper shakers, a greasy notebook and a pencil which Don Rosario sharpened and tucked behind his ear completed this extraordinary collection. Finally out came Donna Sofia herself, bearing dough made of the finest white flour which she had prepared the night before.

Signora Pugliese was a plump woman about thirty years old, with curly blonde hair. Her ample bosom maintained an uneasy balance above her slender waist, and together with the wide hips below gave the impression that her grace and charm hung by a single thread. Her beauty was a triumph of equilibrium whose whole structure might be made to topple by a daring masculine

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sigh or caress, timed to catch her in a moment of bubbling good spirits or languid susceptibility.

A word to the wise . . . But as our story begins, Don Rosario had just lit a fire under the stove and was trying out his voice amid a shower of flying sparks. The *Vico Lungo Sant'Agostino* woke up in a state of vague excitement to the odour of sizzling oil from the pie dish. Just in time, for soon this appeal to the sense of smell was to be succeeded by Don Rosario's stentorian proclamation of his business, which was a strange mixture of banqueting and banking. As you may have guessed, Don Rosario dealt in *pizze* sold on credit.

Soon his first customer, Don Amedeo Cafiero, the night watchman, hove into sight. Probably he had enjoyed quite a few naps in the course of his rounds, for he seemed fresh as a daisy when he plunged into the wreath of smoke ascending from the coal and cooking grease, came out with two fragrant *pizze* wrapped in porous brown paper, sank his teeth into one of them and went his way. Don Rosario wet the tip of his pencil with his tongue and painstakingly wrote down in his notebook: "Watchman Cafiero—two *pizze*."

Payment for these *pizze*, filled with succulent cheese and slivers of ham, did not fall due for a whole week, and this extension of credit did a great deal to stimulate their consumption. Within the space of a week almost anything could happen, including the sudden death of Don Rosario. For this reason, and others like it, inherent to the sky and soil of Naples, stomachs whose capacity was very small when it came to putting down cold cash, seemed able to hold an enormous number of *pizze* bought on the instalment plan, and this to the obvious profit of Don Rosario, who looked jubilantly at his wife and said:

"Step up production!"

Donna Sofia's milk white hands rolled and patted the dough, making a whole scale of sounds, from muffled gutturals to lingering, swollen, sensual notes that caused the customers' moustaches to quiver, especially if at the same time they raised their eyes to gaze upon her charms. The crusts curled up in the pie dish and under carefully measured tablespoonfuls of steaming oil took on the blonde colour of Donna Sofia's armpits. Every customer ate like four men and stared like fifty, while Don Rosario was torn between satisfaction and sorrow, for jealousy gnawed the fattiest and most sensitive point of his sluggish anatomy. Every now and then he shot a glance at the emerald ring on his wife's finger, and the vine covered inn at Resina, where they had had their wedding breakfast, seemed to float before his eyes, with its pergola flapping like a canopy in the breeze against a background of the days and years that had since gone by.

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They had been married four years, and from the very beginning Don Rosario had gone in for heavy food and taking it easy. Donna Sofia came to have a strange affection for his kindly barrelled chest, slow, adoring smile and rather apathetic manifestations of desire, and at their most intimate moments she thought of him as something like a comfortable reclining chair whose arms were always ready to receive her.

Even in the inn at Resina, after he had slipped his mother's emerald ring on her finger, Rosario had felt afraid. Towards the end of the wedding breakfast some chance guests at the inn had pulled their chairs up to the festive table, and among them a young shipbuilder had made himself particularly conspicuous. Don Rosario was overcome by a resentful feeling that no one had any right to eye his wife in such an obnoxious manner, but all he did was to get up in a melancholy way and go out in the garden, where he smoked a cigar and sighed into the rippling water of a deep well.

That night, in his wife's arms, he burst out crying. "What have I done?" she asked with maternal indulgence, and Don Rosario had to use force to prevent her from turning on the light and perceiving that she was far too beautiful for him.

How many men, since that day, had looked at her in the same way as the shipbuilder? Three years later, having come to tip the scales at well over fifteen stone, and hence being less inclined to taking things too strenuously or turning them into a tragedy, Don Rosario began to receive anonymous letters. Although they were written in varied styles and with varied degrees of malice, all of them pointed to the same house and the same man.

Don Rosario had just received the fifteenth letter of this kind on the March morning which we have described above. He and his wife had made an unusually large sale of "*pizze* on credit" and were just bringing the table and oven back into the house when Don Rosario shouted:

"Good God! The ring!"

Donna Sofia started, mindful all of a sudden of the marble top bedside table where she had forgotten it the preceding evening.

"It must have slipped off my finger while I was rolling the dough," she said in a distracted manner. "It's probably in some *pizza* this very minute."

Pizze sold on credit have one great advantage over other delicacies of the pie dish: they are charged up to every individual buyer. Moreover, in spite of his laziness, Don Rosario was a miser. For a few minutes he sank back half unconscious into a chair, under the pitying glance of a group of half-dressed housewives, and struggled against an incipient attack of apoplexy. Then he leaped

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unexpectedly to his feet, grasped his wife's wrist in one hand and his notebook in the other and set out. For the first time Donna Sofia felt that he was a real man. Perhaps she was actually charmed. At any rate she followed him docilely enough, with a feminine enjoyment of impending tragedy, conscious that her bosom was heavy with alarm and imagining herself to have a pale face and a downcast expression.

From cellar to cellar and from shop to shop Don Rosario tracked down everyone who had bought a *pizza* that morning. They were, for the most part, shopkeepers, clerks, working men and women, and before each one of them Don Rosario came to a halt and drew himself up threateningly without saying a word, while his angrily protruding eyes submitted the victim to an X-ray examination. After this initial silence he started his enquiry with a few ironical remarks. Nothing new? Had the *pizza* been a complete success? And which part of it had tasted better, the crust or the filling? Naturally enough, at a certain point the hot southern blood of the interrogated customer boiled over.

"Don Rosario, I demand an explanation!" said the jeweller or the shoemaker deliberately, rising with exaggerated slowness from his chair.

"My records say that you took five *pizze*. So there are five chances of your being the one," said the frenzied Don Rosario, shaking his notebook and going on to the next house.

A serious incident almost took place at the shop of a fruit seller whose face, which was swollen with a toothache, aroused Don Rosario's suspicions.

"An emerald's quite hard enough to break a tooth," he said, in what was to all intents and purposes a direct accusation.

The indignant fruit seller threw himself at his accuser, heedless of the fact that he was straddling a chair, and looking for all the world like Baron Munchausen astride a cannon ball.

Among the sympathetic crowd that was following Don Rosario on his peregrinations the rumour gained currency that he was out of his mind. All day long he wandered about the streets and alleys, until towards evening he felt his wife's arm tremble. On the doorstep of an almost luxurious cellar, which had been mentioned in every one of the anonymous letters, he recognized Don Alfredo Guarino. The rank and profession of Don Alfredo are of no concern to us here. Suffice it to say he was somewhat of a dandy, indolently sporting a suit of flashy hue and extreme cut, and that he gave an imperceptible wink in the direction of Donna Sofia.

"Don Alfredo," she said, drawing a little away from her husband's side, "did you by any chance find a ring of mine in the *pizza* you bought this morning?"

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Among the tears veiling our blonde heroine's eyes, there appeared, like one of the rays of the setting March sun, a flash of light that might have been a signal. The emerald ring gallantly emerged from the pocket of Don Alfredo and dropped into her white hand, amid the ringing applause of the onlookers, all of them firm believers in a happy ending. But Don Rosario's two hundred and ten pounds shook on their foundation, as quickly leafing through his notebook he declared that Don Alfredo had *not* bought a *pizza* that morning.

"You're wrong there. I took four of them; your wife is a witness," replied the nonchalant young man, expressing a desire to pay for them on the spot so that Don Rosario should not have to come back a week later for his money.

Such procedure in the business of "*pizze* on credit" was startlingly new and won Don Alfredo Guarino instant popularity. At this moment he could have run successfully for any office in the land. Don Rosario, somewhat taken aback, surveyed the crowd, which he could see was dead set against any other conclusion to the affair. Messengers had already gone out to relate the final episode of the story, and there was nothing for him and his wife to do but go home.

That night the *Vico Lungo Sant'Agostino degli Scalzi* was agog with whispers. Besides, it was raining. Donna Sofia lay in bed asleep—or very nearly so—with her soft forearm hanging out from the covers, while beside the flour-covered table Don Rosario was still going through his notebook.

"But his name isn't here," he moaned, and all the anonymous letters pained him together at the most sensitive point of his sluggish anatomy. It is hard for a man as spread out as Don Rosario to understand how the charms of a woman like Donna Sofia can hang by a single thread.

* * *

THE PORCUPINE

Any hound a porcupine nudges
Can't be blamed for harbouring grudges.
I know one hound that laughed all winter
At a porcupine that sat on a splinter.

OGDEN NASH

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PRESENTING—

A herd of white elephants, and a gift horse or two

I'll weave my love a garland,
He shall be dressed so fine,
I'll set it round with roses,
With lilies, pinks and thyme ;
And I'll present it to my love
When he comes back from sea :
For I love my love, and I love my love
Because my love loves me.

Author Unknown

Cash and Kind

I did give my wife's brother 10s. and a coat that I had by me, a close-bodied, light-coloured cloth coat, with a gold edgeing in each seam, that was the lace of my wife's best pettycoat that she had when I married her . . .

SAMUEL PEPYS, *Diary*, 10*th February*, 1664

And You Went And Gardened

I brought you elephants and volcano tops
and a eucalyptus tree on a coral island,
I had them in baskets. You looked with surprise
and went away to pick weeds out of the ground.
I brought you under my arm a fleet of ships
and a complete alp and you went and gardened . . .

NORMAN MCCAIG

The Yellow Sapphire

At this time Myrtle used always to pause, when we were walking down Bond Street, before the window of a jeweller's shop. She had her eye on a sapphire ring. The stone was an exquisite yellow and beautifully cut : it was like a small transparent box filled with pure limpid sunlight.

The price of the ring was £700, and let me say at once that I had no intention of buying it. As our marriage drew nearer I felt less and less like the greatest writer since Shakespeare and more and more like a poor government official.

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" I must go and look at my ring," Myrtle used to say, whenever we were nearby. The shop was only small, but it was in the narrowest part of the street and there was no missing it. I acquiesced. Only a woman, I thought, could call " my " something she was never likely to possess.

Myrtle sighed as she stared at the ring. I watched her. Then Myrtle glanced at me, and I had to admit the possibility of seeing in a woman's eyes, even in the eyes of the woman one loves, a light of frank cupidity.

" It's lovely," I said. " How vulgar the diamonds look beside it ! " The diamonds cost anything up to £3,000 and there were a lot of them in the window.

" I like the diamonds, too," said Myrtle. " A girl never says no to diamonds."

" Sometimes the man who's got to pay for them does."

" Darling ! " Myrtle laid her hand on my arm, and looked up at me lovingly. " I don't expect you to buy it for me."

I thought I must be heartless and crude, with even a touch of the mercenary. " I know," I said, " Darling." . . .

Myrtle would have liked me to give her the ring. Of course she would. Yet she was no more heartless nor mercenary than I. The ring had somehow become a symbol to her. If I gave her the yellow sapphire it would show how much I loved her. The fact that it would show literally that I loved her to the tune of £700 was secondary though highly desirable. I thought of how many women I had known who loved presents for this reason. Presents as a proof of being loved—I was touched by the simplicity of it. Would they never realize some men's pockets were more easily touched than their hearts ?

WILLIAM COOPER, *Scenes from Metropolitan Life*

Pot Luck

I design the next week to send you a small pot of cocks . . .

MRS. EDWARD DOBSON *in a letter to a friend, November* 1690

The Book Token

I have endured much today from N., but have thrown half a dozen books at her head as a New Year's gift . . .

BEETHOVEN, *writing to Frau Streicher of one of his endless procession of domestics*

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Offering From A Satyr

Here be berries for a queen,
Some be red, some be green ;
These are of that luscious meat
The great god Pan himself doth eat :
All these, and what the woods can yield,
The hanging mountain or the field.

I must go, I must run,
Swifter than the fiery sun.

JOHN FLETCHER, 1579–1625

Not Pleased

A poor man near Brighton grew a huge turnip and sent it to the King. The King graciously accepted and sent the man a guinea. Hearing this an individual (whose descendants are living, so I leave out the name) bought and sent King William a beautiful valuable horse. The King accepted, and immediately sent the huge turnip in return, saying the horse was so fine that he must give something in return that was equally fine of its kind. The man who had expected a valuable gift was not pleased.

EDWARD BOYS ELLMAN,
Recollections of a Sussex Parson

Devaluation

There cam' Seven Egyptians on a day,
And wow, but they sang bonny !
And they sang sae sweet, and sae very complete,
Down cam' Earl Cassilis' lady.

She cam' tripping adown the stair,
And a' her maids before her ;
As soon as they saw her weel-faur'd face
They cast the glamourie owre her ;

They gave to her the nutmeg,
And they gave to her the ginger ;
And she gave to them a far better thing,
The seven gold rings off her finger.

Scottish Ballad

What, Me ?

I give thee sixpence ! I'll see thee damned first.

GEORGE CANNING, 1770–1827, *The Friend of Humanity and the Knife-Grinder*

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ADAM AND EVE AND PINCH ME

How had it come about — that a man and his own ghost should inhabit the same world?

by A. E. COPPARD

AND in the whole of his days, vividly at the end of the afternoon —he repeated it again and again to himself—the kind country spaces had *never* absorbed *quite* so rich a glamour of light, so miraculous a bloom of clarity. He could feel streaming in his own mind, in his bones, the same crystalline brightness that lay upon the land. Thoughts and images went flowing through him as easily and amiably as fish swim in their pools; and as idly, too, for one of his speculations took up the theme of his family name. There was such an agreeable oddness about it, just as there was about all the luminous sky today, that it touched him as just a little remarkable. What *did* such a name connote, signify, or symbolize? It was a rann of a name, but it had euphony! Then again, like the fish, his ambulating fancy flashed into other shallows, and he giggled as he paused, peering at the buds in the brake.

Turning back towards his house again he could see, beyond its roofs, the spire of the Church tinctured richly as the vane: all around him was a new grandeur upon the grass of the fields, and the spare trees had shadows below that seemed to support them in the manner of a plinth, more real than themselves, and the dykes and any chance heave of the level fields were underlined, as if for special emphasis, with long shades of mysterious blackness.

With a little drift of emotion that had at other times assailed him in the wonder and ecstasy of pure light, Jaffa Codling pushed through the slit in the back hedge and stood within his own garden.

The gardener was at work. He could hear the voices of the children about the lawn at the other side of the house. He was very happy, and the place was beautiful, a fine white many-windowed house rising from a lawn bowered with plots of mould, turreted with shrubs, and overset with a vast walnut tree. This house had deep clean eaves, a roof of faint coloured slates that, after rain, glowed dully, like onyx or jade, under the red chimneys, and half-way up at one end was a balcony set with black balusters.

He went to a French window that stood open and stepped into

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the dining room. There was no one within, and, on that lonely instant, a strange feeling of emptiness dropped upon him. The clock ticked almost as if it had been caught in some indecent act; the air was dim and troubled after that glory outside.

Well, now, he would go up at once to the study and write down for his new book the ideas and images he had accumulated, beautiful rich thoughts they were, during that wonderful afternoon. He went to mount the stairs and he was passed by one of the maids; humming a silly song she brushed past him rudely, but he was an easy-going man—maids were unteachably tiresome—and reaching the landing he sauntered towards his room.

The door stood slightly open and he could hear voices within. He put his hand upon the door . . . it would not open any farther. What the devil . . . he pushed, like the bear in the tale, and he pushed, and he pushed. Was there something against it on the other side? He put his shoulder to it . . . some wedge must be there, and *that* was extraordinary. Then his whole apprehension was swept up and whirled as by an avalanche; Mildred, his wife, was in there; he could hear her speak to a man in fair soft tones and the rich phrases that could be used only by a woman yielding a deep affection for him. Codling kept still. Her words burned on his mind and thrilled him as if spoken to himself. There was a movement in the room, then utter silence. He again thrust savagely at the partly open door, but he could not stir it. The silence within continued. He beat upon the door with his fists, crying: "Mildred, Mildred!" There was no response, but he could hear the rocking arm-chair commence to swing to and fro.

Pushing his hand round the edge of the door he tried to thrust his head between the opening. There was not space for this, but he could just peer into the corner of a mirror hung near, and this is what he saw: the chair at one end of its swing, a man sitting in it, and upon one arm of it Mildred, the beloved woman, with her lips upon the man's face, caressing him with her hands. Codling made another effort to get into the room; as vain as it was violent.

"Do you hear me, Mildred?" he shouted.

Apparently neither of them heard him; they rocked to and fro while he gazed stupefied. What, in the name of God . . . What the . . . was she bewitched . . . were there such things after all as magic, devilry?

He drew back and held himself quite steadily. The chair stopped swaying, and the room grew awfully still. The sharp ticking of the clock in the hall rose upon the house like the tongue of some perfunctory mocker. Couldn't they hear the clock? . . . Couldn't they hear his heart? He had to put his hand upon his heart, for, surely, in that great silence inside there, they would

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hear its beat, growing so loud now that it seemed almost to stun him!

Then in a queer way he found himself reflecting, observing, analysing his own actions and intentions. He found some of them to be just a little spurious, counterfeit. He felt it would be easy, so perfectly easy to flash in one blast of anger and annihilate the two. He would do nothing of the kind. There was no occasion for it. People didn't really do that sort of thing, or, at least, not with a genuine passion. There was no need for anger. His curiosity was satisfied, quite satisfied; he was certain he had not the remotest interest in the man. A welter of unexpected thought swept upon his mind as he stood there. As a writer of books he was often stimulated by the emotions and impulses of other people, and now his own surprise was beginning to intrigue him, leaving him, oh, quite unstirred emotionally, but interesting him profoundly.

He heard the maid come stepping up the stairway again, humming her silly song. He did not want a scene, or to be caught eavesdropping, and so turned quickly to another door. It was locked. He sprang to one beyond it; the handle would not turn.

"Bah! what's *up* with 'em?" But the girl was now upon him, carrying a tray of coffee things.

"Oh, Mary!" he exclaimed casually, "I . . ."

To his astonishment the girl stepped past him as if she did not hear or see him, tapped open the door of his study, entered, and closed the door behind her. Jaffa Codling then got really angry. Hell! were the blasted servants in it?

He dashed to the door again and tore at the handle. It would not even turn, and, though he wrenched with fury at it, the room was utterly sealed against him. He went away for a chair with which to smash the effrontery of that door. No, he wasn't angry, either with his wife or this fellow—Gilbert, she had called him—who had a strangely familiar aspect as far as he had been able to take it in; but when one's servants . . . faugh!

The door opened and Mary came forth smiling demurely. He was a few yards farther along the corridor at that moment.

"Mary!" he shouted, "leave the door open!"

Mary carefully closed it and turned her back on him. He sprang after her with bad words bursting from him as she went towards the stairs and flitted lightly down, humming all the way as if in derision. He leaped downwards after her three steps at a time, but she trotted with amazing swiftness into the kitchen and slammed the door in his face.

Codling stood, but kept his hands carefully away from the door, kept them behind him.

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"No, no," he whispered cunningly. "There's something fiendish about door handles today, I'll go and get a bar, or a butt of timber," and, jumping out into the garden for some such thing, the miracle happened to him.

For it was nothing else than a miracle, the unbelievable, the impossible, simple and laughable if you will, but having as much validity as any miracle can ever invoke. It was simple and laughable because by all the known physical laws he should have collided with his gardener, who happened to pass the window with his wheelbarrow as Codling jumped out on to the path. And it was unbelievable that they should not, and impossible that they *did* not collide; and it was miraculous, because Codling stood for a brief moment in the garden path and the wheelbarrow of Bond, its contents, and Bond himself passed apparently through the figure of Codling as if he were so much air, as if he were not a living breathing man but just a common ghost. There was no impact, just a momentary breathlessness. Codling stood and looked at the retreating figure going on utterly unaware of him.

It is interesting to record that Codling's first feelings were mirthful. He giggled. He was jocular. He ran along in front of the gardener, and let him pass through him once more; then after him again; he scrambled into the man's barrow, and was wheeled about by this incomprehensible thick-headed gardener who was dead to all his master's efforts to engage his attention. Presently he dropped the wheelbarrow and went away, leaving Codling to cogitate upon the occurrence.

There was no room for doubt, some essential part of him had become detached from the obviously not less vital part. He felt he was essential because he was responding to the experience, he was reacting in the normal way to normal stimuli, although he happened for the time being to be invisible to his fellows and unable to communicate with them. How had it come about—this queer thing? How could he discover what part of him had cut loose, as it were? There was no question of this being death; death wasn't funny, it wasn't a joke; he had still all his human instincts. You didn't get angry with a faithless wife or joke with a fool of a gardener if you were dead, certainly not!

He had realized enough of himself to know he was the usual man of instincts, desires, and prohibitions, complex and contradictory; his family history for a million or two years would have denoted that, not explicitly—obviously impossible—but suggestively. He had found himself doing things he had no desire to do, doing things he had a desire *not* to do, thinking thoughts that had no contiguous meaning, no meanings that could be related to his general experience. At odd times he had been chilled—aye, and

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even agreeably surprised—at the immense potential evil in himself. But still, this was no mere Jekyll and Hyde affair; that a man and his own ghost should separately inhabit the same world was a horse of quite another colour.

The other part of him was alive and active somewhere . . . as alive . . . as alive . . . yes, as *he* was, but dashed if he knew where! What a lark when they got back to each other and compared notes!

In his tales he had brooded over so many imagined personalities, followed in the track of so many psychological enigmas that he *had* felt at times a stranger to himself. What if, after all, that brooding had given him the faculty of projecting this figment of himself into the world of men? Or was he some unrealized latent element of being without its natural integument, doomed now to drift over the ridge of the world for ever?

Was it his personality, his spirit? Then how was the dashed thing working? Here was he with the most wonderful happening in human experience, and he couldn't differentiate or disinter things. He was like a new Adam flung into some old Eden.

There was Bond tinkering about with some plants a dozen yards in front of him.

Suddenly his three children came round from the other side of the house, the youngest boy leading them, carrying in his hand a small sword which was made, not of steel, but of some more brightly shining material; indeed it seemed at one moment to be of gold, and then again of flame, transmuting everything in its neighbourhood into the likeness of flame, the hair of the little girl Eve, a part of Adam's tunic; and the fingers of the boy Gabriel as he held the sword were like pale tongues of fire.

Gabriel, the youngest boy, went up to the gardener and gave the sword into his hands, saying: "Bond, is this sword any good?"

Codling saw the gardener take the weapon and examine it with a careful sort of smile; his great gnarled hands became immediately transparent, the blood could be seen moving diligently about the veins. Codling was so interested in the sight that he did not gather in the gardener's reply.

The little boy was dissatisfied and repeated his question, "No, but Bond, *is* this sword any good?"

Codling rose, and stood by invisible. The three beautiful children were grouped about the great angular figure of the gardener in his soiled clothes, looking up now into his face, and now at the sword, with anxiety in all their puckered eyes.

"Well, Marse Gabriel," Codling could hear him reply, "as far as a sword goes, it may be a good un, or it may be a bad un, but, good as it is, it can never be anything but a bad thing." He

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then gave it back to them; the boy Adam held the haft of it, and the girl Eve rubbed the blade with curious fingers.

The younger boy stood looking up at the gardener with unsatisfied gaze. "But, Bond, *can't* you say if this sword's any *good?*"

Bond turned to his spade and trowels. "Mebbe the shape of it's wrong, Marse Gabriel, though it seems a pretty handy size." Saying this he moved off across the lawn.

Gabriel turned to his brother and sister and took the sword from them; they all followed after the gardener and once more Gabriel made inquiry: "Bond, is this sword any *good*?" The gardener again took it and made a few passes in the air like a valiant soldier at exercise. Turning then, he lifted a bright curl from the head of Eve and cut it off with a sweep of the weapon. He held it up to look at it critically and then let it fall to the ground. Codling sneaked behind him and, picking it up, stood stupidly looking at it.

"Mebbe, Marse Gabriel," the gardener was saying, "it 'ud be better made of steel, but it has a smartish edge on it."

He went to pick up the barrow but Gabriel seized it with a spasm of anger, and cried out: "No, no, Bond, will you say, just yes or no, Bond, is this sword any good?" The gardener stood still, and looked down at the little boy, who repeated his question—"just yes or no, Bond!" "No, Marse Gabriel!" "Thank you, Bond!" replied the child with dignity, "that's all we wanted to know," and calling to his mates to follow him, he ran away to the other side of the house.

Codling stared again at the beautiful lock of hair in his hand, and felt himself grow so angry that he picked up a strange looking flower pot at his feet and hurled it at the retreating gardener. It struck Bond in the middle of the back and, passing clean through him, broke on the wheel of his barrow, but Bond seemed to be quite unaware of this catastrophe.

Codling rushed after, and, taking the gardener by the throat, he yelled, "Damn you, will you tell me what all this means?" But Bond proceeded calmly about his work unnoticing, carrying his master about as if he were a clinging vapour, or a scarf hung upon his neck.

In a few moments, Codling dropped exhausted to the ground. "What . . . oh, Hell . . . what, what am I to do?" he groaned. "What has happened to me? What shall I *do*? What *can* I do?" He looked at the broken flower pot. "Did I invent that?" He pulled out his watch. "That's a real watch, I hear it ticking, and it's six o'clock." Was he dead or disembodied or mad? What was this infernal lapse of identity? And who the devil, yes, who was it upstairs with Mildred?

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He jumped to his feet and hurried to the window; it was shut; to the door, it was fastened; he was powerless to open either. Well! well! this was experimental psychology with a vengeance, and he began to chuckle again. He'd have to write to McDougall about it. Then he turned and saw Bond wheeling across the lawn towards him again.

"*Why* is that fellow always shoving that infernal green barrow around?" he asked, and, the fit of fury seizing him again, he rushed towards Bond, but, before he reached him, the three children danced into the garden again, crying with great excitement, "Bond, ah Bond!"

The gardener stopped and set down the terrifying barrow; the children crowded about him, and Gabriel held out another shining thing, asking: "Bond, is this box any good?"

The gardener took the box and at once his eyes lit up with interest and delight. "Oh, Marse Gabriel, where'd ye get it? Where'd ye get it?"

"Bond," said the boy impatiently, "is the box any *good*?"

"Any good?" echoed the man, "why, Marse Gabriel, Marse Adam, Miss Eve, look yere!"

Holding it down in front of them, he lifted the lid from the box and a bright coloured bird flashed out and flew round and round above their heads.

"Oh," screamed Gabriel with delight, "it's a kingfisher!"

"That's what it is," said Bond, "a kingfisher!"

"Where?" asked Adam.

"Where?" asked Eve.

"There it flies—round the fountain—see it? see it!"

"No," said Adam.

"No," said Eve.

"Oh, do, do, see it," cried Gabriel, "here it comes, it's coming!" and, holding his hands on high, and standing on his toes, the child cried out as happy as the bird which Codling saw flying above them.

"I can't see it," said Adam.

"Where is it, Gaby?" asked Eve.

"Oh, you stupids," cried the boy. "*There* it goes. There it goes . . . there . . . it's gone!"

He stood looking brightly at Bond, who replaced the lid.

"What shall we do now?" he exclaimed eagerly. For reply, the gardener gave the box into his hand, and walked off with the barrow. Gabriel took the box over to the fountain. Codling, unseen, went after him, almost as excited as the boy; Eve and her brother followed. They sat upon the stone tank that held the falling water. It was difficult for the child to unfasten the

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lid ; Codling attempted to help him, but he was powerless. Gabriel looked up into his father's face and smiled. Then he stood up and said to the others :

" Now, *do* watch it this time."

They all knelt carefully beside the water. He lifted the lid and, behold, a fish like a gold carp, but made wholly of fire, leaped from the box into the fountain. The man saw it dart down into the water, he saw the water bubble up behind it, he heard the hiss that the junction of fire and water produced, and saw a little track of steam follow the bubbles about the tank until the figure of the fish was consumed and disappeared. Gabriel, in ecstasies, turned to his sister with blazing happy eyes, exclaiming :

" There ! Evey ! "

" What was it ? " asked Eve, nonchalantly. " I didn't see anything."

" More didn't I," said Adam.

" Didn't you see that lovely fish ? "

" No," said Adam.

" No," said Eve.

" Oh, stupids," cried Gabriel, " it went right past the bottom of the water."

" Let's get a fishin' hook," said Adam.

" No, no, no," said Gabriel, replacing the lid of the box. " Oh no."

Jaffa Codling had remained on his knees staring at the water so long that, when he looked around him again, the children had gone away. He got up and went to the door, and that was closed ; the windows, fastened. He went moodily to a garden bench and sat on it with folded arms.

Dusk had begun to fall into the shrubs and trees, the grass to grow dull, the air chill, the sky to muster its gloom. Bond had overturned his barrow, stalled his tools in the lodge, and gone to his home in the village. A curious cat came round the house and surveyed the man who sat chained to his seven-horned dilemma. It grew dark and fearfully silent. Was the world empty now ? Some small thing, a snail, perhaps, crept among the dead leaves in the hedge, with a sharp, irritating noise.

A strange flood of mixed thoughts poured through his mind until at last one idea disentangled itself, and he began thinking with tremendous fixity of little Gabriel. He wondered if he could brood, or meditate, or " will " with sufficient power to bring him into the garden again. The child had just vaguely recognized him for a moment at the waterside. He'd try that dodge, telepathy was a mild kind of a trick after so much of the miraculous. If he'd lost his

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blessed body, at least the part that ate and smoked and talked to Mildred . . . He stopped as his mind stumbled on a strange recognition . . . What a joke, of course . . . idiot . . . not to have seen *that*. He stood up in the garden with joy . . . of course, *he* was upstairs with Mildred, it was himself, the other bit of him, that Mildred had been talking to. What a howling fool he'd been.

He found himself concentrating his mind on the purpose of getting the child Gabriel into the garden once more, but it was with a curious mood that he endeavoured to establish this relationship. He could not fix his will into any calm intensity of power, or fixity of purpose, or pleasurable mental ecstasy. The utmost force seemed to come with a malicious threatening splenetic "entreaty."

That damned snail in the hedge broke the thread of his meditation; a dog began to bark sturdily from a distant farm; the faculties of his mind became joggled up like a child's picture puzzle, and he brooded unintelligibly upon such things as skating and steam engines, and Elizabethan drama so lapped about with themes like jealousy and chastity. Really now, Shakespeare's Isabella was the most consummate snob in . . .

He looked up quickly to his wife's room and saw Gabriel step from the window to the balcony as if he were fearful of being seen. The boy lifted up his hands and placed the bright box on the rail of the balcony. He looked up at the faint stars for a moment or two, and then carefully released the lid of the box. What came out of it and rose into the air appeared to Codling to be just a piece of floating light, but as it soared above the roof he saw it grow to be a little ancient ship, with its hull and fully set sails and its three masts all of faint primrose colour. It cleaved through the air, rolling slightly as a ship through the waves, in widening circles above the house, making a curving ascent until it lost the shape of a vessel and became only a moving light hurrying to some sidereal shrine.

Codling glanced at the boy on the balcony, but in that brief instant something had happened, the ship had burst like a rocket and released three coloured drops of fire which came falling slowly, leaving beautiful grey furrows of smoke in their track. Gabriel leaned over the rail with outstretched palms, and, catching the green star and the blue one as they drifted down to him, he ran with a trill of laughter back into the house. Codling sprang forward just in time to catch the red star; it lay vividly blasting his own palm for a monstrous second, and then, slipping through, was gone. He stared at the ground, at the balcony, the sky, and then heard an exclamation . . . his wife stood at his side.

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"Gilbert! How you frightened me!" she cried, "I thought you were in your room; come along in to dinner."

She took his arm and they walked up the steps into the dining room together.

"Just a moment," said her husband, turning to the door of the room.

His hand was upon the handle, which turned easily in his grasp, and he ran upstairs to his own room. He opened the door. The light was on, the fire was burning brightly, a smell of cigarette smoke about, pen and paper upon his desk, the Japanese book-knife, the gilt matchbox, everything all right, no one there. He picked up a book from his desk . . . *Monna Vanna*. His bookplate was in it—*Ex Libris—Gilbert Cannister*. He put it down beside the green dish; two yellow oranges were in the green dish, and two most deliberately green Canadian apples rested by their side. He went to the door and swung it backwards and forwards quite easily. He sat on his desk trying to piece the thing together, glaring at the print and the book-knife and the smart matchbox, until his wife came up behind him exclaiming: "Come along, Gilbert!"

"Where are the kids, old girl?" he asked her, and, before she replied, he had gone along to the nursery. He saw the two cots, his boy in one, his girl in the other.

He turned whimsically to Mildred, saying, "There *are* only two, *are* there?"

Such a question did not call for reply, but he confronted her as if expecting some assuring answer. She was staring at him with her bright beautiful eyes.

"Are there?" he repeated.

"How strange you should ask me that now!" she said . . . "If you're a very good man . . . perhaps . . ."

"Mildred!"

She nodded brightly.

He sat down in the rocking-chair, but got up again saying to her gently, "We'll call him Gabriel."

"But, suppose—"

"No, no," he said, stopping her lovely lips, "I know all about him."

And he told her a pleasant little tale.

* * *

DEFINITION

A moralist is a person who is in earnest about other people's morals.

F. MARION CRAWFORD

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★*The late Sinclair Lewis, author of "Main Street," "Babbitt," "Arrowsmith" and "Dodsworth" needs no introduction, but this unknown story—a brilliant piece of satire—will come as a surprise even to the author's devotees. It has been gathering the dust of obscurity for thirty years, and to the best of our knowledge has never before appeared in this country.*

POST-MORTEM MURDER

by SINCLAIR LEWIS

I WENT to Kennuit to be quiet through the summer vacation. I was tired after my first year as associate professor, and I had to finish my *Life of Ben Jonson*. Certainly the last thing I desired was that dying man in the hot room and the pile of scrawled manuscripts.

I boarded with Mrs. Nickerson in a cottage of silver-grey shingles under silver-grey poplars, heard only the harsh fiddling of locusts and the distant rage of the surf, looked out on a yard of bright wild grass and a jolly windmill weather-vane, and made notes about Ben Jonson.

My fiancée—Quinta Gates, sister of Professor Gates, and lovelier than ever in the delicate culture she had attained at thirty-seven—Quinta urged me to join them at Fleet Harbour. It is agreeable to be with Quinta. While I cannot say that we are stirred to such absurd manifestations as kissing and hand-holding—why any sensible person should care to hold a damp female hand is beyond me—we do find each other inspiriting. But Fleet Harbour would be full of dreadful young people in white flannels, singing jazz ballads.

No, at the thought of my spacious, leafy freedom I wriggled with luxury and settled down to an absorbed period when night and day glided into one ecstasy of dreaming study. Naturally, then, I was angry when I heard a puckery voice outside in the tiny hallway :

"Well, if he's a professor, I got to see him."

A knock. I affected to ignore it. It was irritatingly repeated until I roared, "Well, well, well?" I am normally, I trust, a gentle person, but I desired to give them the impression of annoyance.

Mrs. Nickerson billowed in, squeaking :

"Mis' White from Lobster Pot Neck wants to see you."

Past her wriggled a pinch-faced humourless-looking woman.

I believe I rose and did the usual civilities. I remember this

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woman, Miss or Mrs. White, immediately asking me, with extraordinary earnestness: "Are you a professor?"

"I teach English."

"You write books?"

I pointed to a box of manuscript.

"Then, please, you got to help us. Byron Sanders is dying. He says he's got to see a learned man to give him some important papers." Doubtless I betrayed hesitation, for I can remember her voice rising in creepy ululation: "Please! He's dying—that good old man that never hurt nobody!"

I fluttered about the room to find my cap. I fretted that her silly phrase of "important papers" sounded like a melodrama, with maps of buried treasure, or with long-lost proofs that the kitchen-hand is really the kidnapped son of royalty. But these unconscious defences against the compulsion expressed in her face, with its taut and terrified oval of open mouth, were in vain. I came stumbling and breathless after her.

She walked rapidly, unspeaking, intense, and I followed six inches behind, bespelled by her red-and-black gingham waist and her chip of a brown hat. We slipped among the grey houses of the town, stumped into country stilly and shimmering with late afternoon. By a trail among long salty grasses we passed an inlet where sandpipers sprinted and horseshoe-crabs bobbed on the crisping ripples. We crossed a moorland to a glorious point of blowing grasses and sharp salt odour, with the waves of the harbour flickering beyond. In that resolute place my embarrassed awe was diluted, and I almost laughed as I wondered:

"What is this story-book errand? Ho, for the buried treasure! I'll comfort the poor dying gentleman, and be back in time for another page before supper. The harbour is enchanting. I really must have a sail this summer or go swimming."

My liveliness, uneasy at best in the presence of that frightened, fleeing woman, wavered when we had dipped down through a cranberry-bog and entered a still, hot wood of dying pines. They were dying, I tell you, as that old man in there was dying. The leaves were of a dry colour of brick dust; they had fallen in heaps that crunched beneath my feet; the trunks were lean and black; and all the dim alleys were choking with a dusty odour of decay.

Through ugly trunks and red needles we came to a restrained yard door and an ancient, irregular house, a dark house, very sullen. No one had laughed there these many years. The windows were draped. The low porch was drifted with the pine-needles. My companion's tread was startling and indecent on the flapping planks. She held open the door. I hesitated. I was not annoyed now; I was afraid, and I knew not of what I was afraid.

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Prickly with unknown disquietude, I entered. We traversed a hall choked with relics of the old shipping days of Kennuit: a whale's vertebra, a cribbage-board carved in a walrus-tusk, a Chinese screen of washed-out gold pagodas on faded, weary black. We climbed a narrow stair over which jutted, like a secret trap-door, the corner of a mysterious chamber above. My companion opened a door in the upper hall and croaked, " In there."

As I edged in, about me crept an odour of stale air and vile medicines and ancient linen. The shutters were fast; the light was grudging. I was actually relieved when I saw in the four-poster bed a pitiful vellum-faced old man, and the worst monster I had to face was normal illness.

I have learned that Byron Sanders was only seventy-one then, but he seemed ninety. He was enormous. He must have been hard to care for. His shoulders, in the mended linen nightgown thrust up above the patchwork comforter, were bulky; his neck was thick; his head a shiny dome—an Olympian, majestic even in dissolution.

The room had been lived in too long. It was a whirl of useless things: staggering chairs, clothes in piles, greasy medicine-bottles, and a vast writing-desk pouring out papers, and dingy books with bindings of speckled brown. Amid the litter, so still that she seemed part of it, I was startled to discern another woman. Who she may have been I have never learned.

The man was peering at me through the shaky light.

" You are a professor ? " he wheezed.

" That depends upon what you mean, sir. I teach English. I am not—"

" You understand poetry, essays, literary history ? "

" I am supposed to."

" I'm kind of a colleague of yours. Byron—" He stopped, choked frightfully. The repressed woman beside the bed, moving with stingy patience wiped his lips. " My name is Byron Sanders. For forty years, till a year ago, I edited the *Kennuit Beacon*."

The nauseating vanity of man ! In that reverent hour, listening to the entreaties of a dying man, I was yet piqued at having my stripped athletic scholarship compared to editing the *Beacon*, with its two straggly columns of news about John Brown's cow and Jim White's dory.

His eyes trusting me, Byron Sanders went on:

" Can't last long. No time to plan. I want you to take the literary remains of my father. He was not a good man, but he was a genius. I have his poetry here, and the letters. I haven't read them for years, and—too late—give them to world. You must—"

He was desperately choking. The still [illegible]an crept up, thrust

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into my hands a box of papers and a pile of notebooks which had been lying on the bed.

"You must go," she muttered. "Say, 'Yes,' and go."

"Will you?" the broken giant wailed to me, a stranger!

"Yes, yes, indeed; I'll give them to the world," I mumbled, while the woman pushed me towards the door.

I fled down the stairs, through the coppery pine-woods, up to the blithe headland that was swept by the sea-breeze.

I knew, of course, what the "poetry" of that poor "genius" his father would be—Christmas doggerel and ditties about "love" and "dove," "heart" and "must part." I was, to be honest, irritated. I took it home and tried to forget it.

In the next week's *Kennuit Beacon*, discovered on Mrs. Nickerson's parlour-table, crowning a plush album, I read that Byron Sanders, "the founder and for many years the highly esteemed editor of this paper," had died.

I sought relatives to whom I could turn over his father's oddments. There was no one; he was a widower and childless. For months the bothersome papers were lost in my desk at the university. On the opening day of the Christmas vacation I remembered that I had not read a word of them. I was to go to Quinta Gates's for tea at a quarter to five, and to her serene companionship I looked forward as, in a tired, after-term desultoriness, I sat down to glance at Jason Sanders's caterwaulings. That was at four. It was after nine when the flabby sensation of hunger brought me back to my room and the dead fire.

In those five hours I had discovered a genius. The poetry at which I had so abominably sneered was minted glory.

I stood up, and in that deserted building I shouted, and listened to the tremor of the lone sound and defiantly shouted again. That I was "excited" is too pallid a word. My life of Jonson could go hang! I was selfish about it: it meant fame for me. But I think something higher than selfishness had already come into my devotion to Jason Sanders; something of the creator's passion and the father's pride.

It was all there; manuscripts which had not been touched since 1850, which still held in their wrinkles the very air of seventy years ago: a diary; daguerreotypes; and letters from Poe, Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, and the young Tennyson!

The diary had been intermittently kept for fifteen years. It was outline enough for me to reconstruct the story of Jason Sanders, born at Kennuit in 1825, probably died in Greece in 1853.

Between Cape C[illegible]e ocean is a war sinister and incessant.

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Here and there the ocean has gulped a farm, or a lighthouse reared on a cliff, but at Kennuit the land has been the victor. Today there are sandy flats and tepid channels where a hundred years ago was an open harbour brilliant with a hundred sails, crackling with tidings from the Banks, proud of whalers back from years of cruising off Siberia and of West Indiamen pompous with rum and sugar and the pest.

Captain Bethuel Sanders, master and owner of the *Sally S.*, was on a voyage out of Kennuit to Pernambuco when his only child, Jason Sanders, was born. He never came back. In every Cape Cod burying-ground, beside the meeting-house, there are a score of headstones with "Lost at sea." There is one, I know now, at Kennuit for Bethuel Sanders.

His widow, daughter of a man of God who for many years had been pastor at Truro, was a tight, tidy, capable woman. Bethuel left her a competence. She devoted herself to keeping house and to keeping her son from going to sea. He was not to die as his father had, perhaps alone, last man on a wave-smashed brig. Theirs was a neat, unkindly cottage with no windows on the harbour side. The sailors' women-folks did not greatly esteem the view to sea, for thither went the strong sons who would never return.

In the first pages of Jason's diary, when he was only thirteen, he raged that while his schoolmates were already off to the Banks or beholding, as cabin-boys, the shining Azores, he was kept at his lessons, unmanned, in apron-strings. Resources of books he had from his parson grandsire: Milton, Jeremy Taylor, Pope. If the returned adventurers sneered at him, he dusted their jackets. He must have been hardy and reasonably vicious. He curtly records that he beat Peter Williams, son of the Reverend Abner Williams, "till he could scarce move," and that for this ferocity he was read out of meeting. He became a hermit, the village "bad boy."

He was at once scorned as a "softy" by his mates because he did not go to sea, dreaded by their kin because he was a marking fighter, bombarded by his Uncle Ira because he would not become a grocer, and chided by his mother because he had no calling to the ministry. Nobody, apparently, took the trouble to understand him. The combination of reading and solitude led him inevitably to scribbling. On new-washed Cape Cod afternoons, when grasses rustled on the cream-shadowed dunes, he sat looking out to sea, chin in hand, staring at ardent little waves and lovely sails that bloomed and vanished as the schooners tacked; and through evenings rhythmic with the surf he sought with words which should make him enviable to justify himself and his mocked courage.

At twenty he ran off to sea on a fishing schooner.

Twenty he was and strong, but when he returned his mother larruped him. Apparently he submitted; his comment in the famous

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diary is: "Mother kissed me in welcome, then, being a woman of whimsies somewhat distasteful to a man of my sober nature, she stripped off my jacket and lashed me with a strip of whale-bone long and surprisingly fanged. I shall never go a-whaling if so very little of a whale can be so very unamiable."

This process neatly finished, Mrs. Sanders—she was a swift and diligent woman—immediately married the young bandit off to a neighbour woman four years his senior, a comely woman, pious, and gifted with dullness. Within the year was born a son, the Byron Sanders whom I saw dying as a corpulent elder.

That was in 1847, and Jason was twenty-two.

He went to work—dreaming and the painful carving of beautiful words not being work—in the Mammoth Store and Seamen's Outfitters. He was discharged for *imprimis*, being drunk and abusive; further, stealing a knife of the value of two shillings. For five or six years he toiled in a sail-loft. I fancy that between stitchings of thick canvas he read poetry, a small book hidden in the folds of a topsail, and with a four-inch needle he scratched on shingles a plan of Troy. He was discharged now and then for roistering, and now and then was grudgingly hired again.

He drank Jamaica rum, he stole strawberries, his ways with the village girls were neither commendable nor in the least commended, and his temper was such that he occasionally helped himself to a fight with sailors, and regularly, with or without purpose, thrashed the unfortunate Peter Williams, son of the Reverend Abner.

He was altogether casual about deserting his wife and child when, the year after his mother died, he ran away to the Crimean War. But I think one understands that better in examining, as I have examined with microscope and aching eye, the daguerreotypes of Jason and his wife and boy.

Straight-nosed and strong-lipped was Jason at twenty-six or seven. Over his right temple hung an impatient lock. He wore the high, but open and flaring, collar of the day, the space in front filled with the soft folds of a stock. A fluff of side-whiskers along the jaw set off his resoluteness of chin and brow. His coat was long-skirted and heavy, a cumbrous garment, yet on him as graceful as a cloak.

But his wife! Her eyes stared, and her lips, though for misery and passionate prayer they had dark power, seem in the mirrory old picture to have had no trace of smiles. Their son was dumpy. As I saw him dying there in the pine woods, Byron Sanders appeared a godly man and intelligent; but at six or seven he was pudding-faced, probably with a trick of howling. In any case, with or without reason, Jason foully deserted them.

In 1853, at the beginning of the struggle between Russia and Turkey that was to develop into the Crimean War, Greece planned

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to invade Turkey. Later, to prevent alliance between Greece and Russia, the French and English forces held Peiraieus; but for a time Greece seemed liberated. Jason's diary closes with a note:

Tomorrow I leave this place of sand and sandy brains; make by friend Bearse's porgy boat for Long Island, thence to New York and ship for Peiraieus, for the glory of Greece and the memory of Byron. How better can a man die? And perhaps some person of intelligence there will comprehend me. Thank fortune my amiable spouse knows naught. If ever she finds this, may she grant forgiveness, as I grant it to her!

That is all—all save a clipping from the *Lynmouth News Letter* of seven years later announcing that as no word of Mr. Jason Sanders had come since his evanishment, his widow was petitioning the court to declare him legally dead.

This is the pinchbeck life of Jason Sanders. He lived not in life, but in his writing, and that is tinct with genius. Five years before Whitman was known he was composing what today we call "free verse." There are in it impressions astoundingly like Amy Lowell. The beauty of a bitter tide-scourged garden and of a bitter sea-scourged woman who walks daily in that sterile daintiness is one of his themes, and the poem is as radiant and as hard as ice.

Then the letters.

Jason had sent his manuscripts to the great men of the day. From most of them he had noncommittal acknowledgments. His only encouragement came from Edgar Allan Poe, who in 1849, out of the depths of his own last discouragement, wrote with sympathy:

I pledge you my heart that you can have talent. You will go far if you can endure hatred and disgust, forgetfulness and bitter bread, blame for your most valorous and for your weakness and meekness, the praise of matrons and the ladylike.

That letter was the last thing I read before dawn on Christmas Day.

On the first train after Christmas I hastened down to the winter-clutched cape.

As Jason had died sixty-five years before, none but persons of eighty or more would remember him. One woman of eighty-six I found, but beyond, "Heh? Whas sat?" she confided only: "Jassy Sanders was a terror to snakes. Run away from his family, that's what he done! Him write poetry? Why, he was a sail-maker!"

I heard then of Abiathar Gould, eighty-seven years old, and already become a myth streaked with blood and the rust of copper

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bottoms. He had been a wrecker, suspected of luring ships ashore with false lights in order that he might plunder them with his roaring mates. He had had courage enough, plunging in his whaleboat through the long swells after a storm, but mercy he had not known. He lived down by the Judas Shoals, on a lean spit of sand running seven miles below Lobster Pot Neck.

How could one reach him ? I asked Mrs. Nickerson.

Oh, that was easy enough : one could walk ! Yes, and one did walk, five miles against a blast whirling with snow, grinding with teeth of sand. I wore Mr. Aaron Bloomer's coonskin coat, Mrs. Nickerson's grey flannel muffler, David Dill's fishing-boots, and Mrs. Antonia Sparrow's red flannel mittens ; but, by the gods, the spectacles were my own, and mine the puffing, the cramped calves, and the breath that froze white on that itchy collar ! Past an inlet with grasses caught in the snow-drifted ice ; along the frozen beach, which stung my feet at every pounding step ; among sand-dunes, which for a moment gave blessed shelter ; out again into the sweep of foam-slavering wind, the bellow of the surf, I went.

I sank all winded on the icy step of Captain Abiathar Gould's bachelor shack.

He was not deaf and he was not dull at eighty-seven. He came to the door, looked down on me, and grunted :

" What do you want ? D'yuh bring me any hootch ? "

I hadn't. There was much conversation bearing on that point while I broiled by his stove. I opened :

" Cap'n, you knew Jason Sanders ? "

" Sanders ? I knew Byron Sanders, and Gideon Sanders of Wellfleet and Cephas Sanders of Falmouth and Bessie Sanders, but I never knew no Jason—oh, wa'n't he Byron's pa ? Sure I remember him. Eight or nine years old 'n I was. Died in foreign parts. I was a boy on the *Dancing Jig* when he went fishing. Only time he ever went. Wa'n't much of a fisherman."

" Yes, but what do you remember—"

" Don't remember nothing. Jassy never went with us fellows ; had his nose in a book. Some said he was a good fighter ; I dunno."

" But didn't you—how did he talk, for instance ? "

" Talk ? Talked like other folks, I suppose. But he wa'n't a fisherman, like the rest of us. Oh, one time he tanned my hide for tearing up some papers that I swiped for gun-wadding."

" What did he say then ? "

" He said—"

On second thought it may not be discreet to report what Jason said. Beyond that Captain Gould testified only :

" Guess I kind of get him mixed up with the other fellows ; good many years ago. But "—he brightened—" I recollect he wa'n't

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handy round a schooner. No, he wa'n't much of a fisherman."

No newspaper had been published in Kennuit before 1877, and I unearthed nothing more. Yet this very blankness made Jason Sanders my own province. I knew incomparably more about him than any other living soul. He was at once my work, my spiritual ancestor, and my beloved son. I forgot my studies of Ben Jonson. I was obsessed by Jason.

Quinta Gates—I don't know—when I met her at the president's reception in February, she said I had been neglecting her. At the time I supposed that she was merely teasing; but I wonder now. She was—oh, too cool; she hadn't quite the frankness I had come to depend on in her. I didn't care. Striding the dunes with Jason, I couldn't return to Quinta and the discussion of sonatas in a lavender twilight over thin tea-cups.

I gave Jason Sanders to the world in a thumping article in *The Weekly Gonfalon*.

Much of it was reprinted in the New York *Courier*'s Sunday literary section, with Jason's picture, and—I note it modestly—with mine, the rather interesting picture of me in knickers sitting beside Quinta's tennis court. Then the New York *Gem* took him up. It did not mention me or my article. It took Jason under its own saffron wing and crowed, at the head of a full-page Sunday article:

VICIOUS EUROPEAN CONSPIRACY HIDES DEATH OF GREATEST AMERICAN BARD

I was piqued by their theft, but I was also amused to see the creation of a new mythical national hero. *The Gem* had Jason sailing nine of the seven seas, and leading his crew to rescue a most unfortunate Christian maiden who had been kidnapped by the Turks—at Tangier! About the little matter of deserting his wife and son *The Gem* was absent-minded. According to them, Jason's weeping helpmate bade him, "Go where duty calls you," whereupon he kissed her, left her an agreeable fortune, and departed with banners and bands. But *The Gem*'s masterpiece was the interview with Captain Abiathar Gould, whose conversational graces I have portrayed. In *The Gem* Captain Gould rhapsodizes:

We boys was a wild lot, sailing on them reckless ships. But Captain Jason Sanders was, well, sir, he was like a god to us. Not one of the crew would have dared, like he done, to spring overboard in a wintry blast to rescue the poor devils capsized in a dory, and yet he was so quiet and scholarly, always a-reading at his poetry books between watches. Oh, them was wonderful days on the "Dancing Jig!"

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The Gem reporter must have taken down to Abiathar some of the "hootch". I failed to bring with me.

I was—to be honest, I was unacademically peeved. My hero was going out of my hands, and I wanted him back. I got him back. No one knew what had happened to Jason after he went to Greece, but I found out. With a friend in the European history department I searched all available records of Greek history in 1853-54.

We discovered that in '54, when the French and English occupied Peiraieus, a mysterious Lieutenant Jasmin Sandec appeared as a popular hero in Athens. Do you see the resemblance? Jasmin Sandec—Jason Sanders. The romantic boy had coloured his drab Yankee name. Nobody quite knew who Lieutenant Sandec was. He was not Greek. The French said he was English; the English said he was French. He led a foray of rollicking young Athenians against the French lines; he was captured and incontinently shot. After his death an American sea captain identified Lieutenant Sandec as a cousin of his! He testified that Sandec was not his name, though what his name was the skipper did not declare. He ended with:

"My cousin comes from the town of Kennebunkport, and has by many people been thought to be insane."

Need I point out how easily the Greek scribe confused Kennebunkport with Kennuit? As easily as the miserable cousinly captain confused insanity with genius.

Do you see the picture of Jason's death? Was it not an end more fitting than moulding away in a sail-loft, or becoming a grocer, a parson, an associate professor? The Grecian afternoon sun glaring on whitewashed wall, the wine-dark sea, the marble-studded hills of Sappho, and a youth, perhaps in a crazy uniform, French shako and crimson British coat, Cape Cod breeches and Grecian boots, lounging dreamily, not quite understanding; a line of soldiers with long muskets; a volley, and that fiery flesh united to kindred dust from the bright body of Helen and the thews of Ajax.

The report of these facts about Jason's fate I gave in my second article in *The Gonfalon*. By this time people were everywhere discussing Jason. It was time for my book.

Briefly, it was a year's work. It contained all his writing and the lives of three generations of Sanderses. It had a reasonable success, and it made of Jason's notoriety a solid fame. So, in 1919, sixty-five years after his death, he began to live.

An enterprising company published his picture in a large carbon print which appeared on school-room walls beside portraits of Longfellow, Lowell, and Washington. In New York, at a pageant representing the great men of America, he was enacted by a clever young man made up to the life, and shown as talking to Poe. That,

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of course, was inaccurate. Then he appeared as a character in a novel; he was condescendingly mentioned by a celebrated visiting English poet; his death was made the subject of a painting; a motion-picture person inquired as to the possibilities of "filming" him, and he was, in that surging tide of new living, suddenly murdered!

The poison which killed Jason the second time was in a letter to *The Gonfalon* from Whitney A. Edgerton, Ph.D., adjunct professor of English literature in Melanchthon College.

Though I had never met Edgerton, we were old combatants. The dislike had started with my stern, but just, review of his edition of Herrick. Edgerton had been the only man who had dared to sneer at Jason. In a previous letter in *The Gonfalon* he had hinted that Jason had stolen his imagery from Chinese lyrics, a pretty notion, since Jason probably never knew that the Chinese had any literature save laundry bills. But now I quote his letter:

I have seen reproductions of a very bad painting called "The Death of Jason Sanders," portraying that admirable young person as being shot in Greece. It happened that Mr. Sanders was not shot in Greece. He deserved to be, but he wasn't. Jason Sanders was not Jasmin Sandec. The changing of his own honest name to such sugar-candy was the sort of thing he would have done. But he didn t do it. What kept Jason from heroically dying in Greece in 1854 *was the misfortune that from December, '53, to April, '58, he was doing time in the Delaware State Penitentiary for the crimes of arson and assault with intent to kill. His poetic cell in Delaware was the nearest he ever came to Greece. Yours, etc.*

WHITNEY EDGERTON

The editor of *The Gonfalon* telegraphed me the contents of the letter just too late for me to prevent its printing, and one hour later I was bound for Delaware, forgetting, I am afraid, that Quinta had invited me to dinner. I knew that I would "show up" this Edgerton.

The warden of the peniteniary was interested. He helped me. He brought out old registers. We were thorough. We were too thorough. We read that Jason Sanders of Kennuit, Massachusetts, married, profession sailmaker, was committed to the penitentiary in December, 1853, for arson and murderous assault, and that he was incarcerated for over four years.

In the Wilmington library, in the files of a newspaper long defunct, I found an item dated November, 1853:

What appears to have been a piece of wretched scoundrelism was perpetrated at the house of Mr. Palatinus, a highly esteemed farmer residing near Christiansburg, last Thursday. Mr. Palatinus

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gave food and shelter to a tramp calling himself Sanders, in return for some slight labour. The second evening the fellow found some spirits concealed in the barn, became intoxicated, demanded money from Mr. Palatinus, struck him, cast the lamp upon the floor, and set fire to the dwelling. He has been arrested and is held for trial. He is believed to have been a sailor from Cape Cod.

I did not make any especial haste to communicate my discoveries. It was a New York *Gem* correspondent who did that. His account was copied rather widely.

The pictures of Jason were taken down from school-room walls.

I returned to the university. I was sustained only by Quinta's faith. As she sat by the fire, chin resting against fragile fingers, she asserted, "Perhaps there has been some mistake." That inspired me. I left her, too hastily, it may be, but she is ever one to understand and forgive. I fled to my rooms, stopping only to telephone to my friend of the history department. He assured me that there was a common Greek family name, Palatainos. You will note its resemblance to Palatinus! At this I jigged in the telephone-booth and joyfully beat on the resounding walls.

I began my new letter to *The Gonfalon* at ten in the evening. I finished it at five of a cold morning. I remember myself as prowling through the room with no dignity, balancing myself ridiculously on the brass bar at the foot of my bed, beating my desk with my fists.

In my letter I pointed out—I virtually proved—that the Delaware farmer's name was not Palatinus, but Palatainos. He was a Greek. He could not have sheltered Jason "in return for some slight labour," because this was December, when farm-work was slackest. No, this Palatainos was an agent of the Greek revolutionists. Jason was sent from New York to see him. Can you not visualize it?

The ardent youngster arrives, is willing to take from Palatainos any orders, however desperate. And he finds that Palatainos is a traitor, is in the pay of the Turks! Sitting in the kitchen, by a fireplace of whitewashed bricks, Palatainos leers upon the horrified Yankee lad with the poisonous sophistication of an international spy. He bids Jason spy upon the Greeks in America. Staggered, Jason goes feebly up to bed. All next day he resists the traitor's beguilement. Palatainos plies him with brandy. The poet sits brooding; suddenly he springs up, righteously attacks Palatainos, the lamp is upset, the house partly burned, and Jason, a stranger and friendless, is arrested by the besotted country constable. He was, in prison, as truly a martyr to freedom as if he had veritably been shot in a tender-coloured Grecian afternoon!

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My reconstruction of the history was—though now I was so distressed that I could take but little pride in it—much quoted from *The Gonfalon* not only in America, but abroad. I turned to the tracing of Jason's history after his release from the penitentiary, since now I did not know when and where he actually had died. I was making plans when there appeared another letter from Whitney Edgerton, the secret assassin of Jason. He snarled that Palatinus's name was not Palatainos. It was Palatinus. He was not a Greek; he was a Swede.

I wrote to Edgerton, demanded his proofs, his sources for all this information. He did not answer.

The Gonfalon announced that it had been deceived in regard to Jason, that it would publish nothing more about him. So for the third time Jason Sanders was killed.

Shaky, impoverished by my explorations on Cape Cod and in Delaware, warned by the dean that I should do well to stick to my teaching and cease "these unfortunate attempts to gain notoriety," I slunk into quiet classwork, seemingly defeated. Yet all the while I longed to know when and where Jason really had died. Might he not have served valorously in the American Civil War? But how was I to know? Then came my most extraordinary adventure in the service of Jason Sanders.

I went to Quinta's for tea. I have wondered sometimes if Quinta may not have become a bit weary of my speculations about Jason. I did not mean to bore her; I tried not to; but I could think of nothing else, and she alone was patient with me.

"How—how—how can I force Edgerton to tell all he knows?" I said with a sigh.

"Go and see him!" Quinta was impatient.

"Why, you know I can't afford to, with all my savings gone, and Edgerton way out in Nebraska."

She shocked me by leaving the room. She came back holding out a cheque—for three hundred dollars! The Gateses are wealthy, but naturally I could not take this. I shook my head.

"Please!" she said sharply. "Let's get it over."

I was suddenly hopeful.

"Then you do believe in Jason? I'd thought you were almost indifferent to him."

"I—" It flared out, that sound. She went on compactly: "Let's not talk about it, please. Now tell me, didn't you think they made a mistake at the symphony—"

I had a not at all pleasant conference with the dean before I took my train for Melanchthon, Nebraska.

I had a plan. I would pretend to be a chap who, after working

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in offices, that sort of thing, desired to begin graduate work in English, but had first to make up for the courses he had forgotten since college. I wanted the celebrated Dr. Whitney Edgerton to tutor me. I would lure him into boarding me at his house; a young professor like Edgerton would be able to use the money. Once dwelling there, it would be easy enough to search his study, to find what histories or letters had furnished his secret knowledge of Jason.

I adopted as *nom de guerre* the name Smith. That was, perhaps, rather ingenious, since it is a common name, and therefore unlikely to arouse attention. It should have been easy.

But when, in Melanchthon, I was directed to Edgerton's house, I perceived that, instead of being a poor devil, he was uncomfortably rich. His was a monstrous Georgian house, all white columns and dormers and iron window-railings and brick terrace and formal gardens. I gained entrance, and addressed myself to Edgerton.

He was a square-built, pompous, rimless-eyeglassed, youngish man. His study was luxurious, with velvet curtains at the windows, with a vast desk, with built-in cases containing books I yearned to possess; a vast apartment, all white and tender blue, against which my own two patchy rooms seemed beggary. I had expected to have to conceal hatred, but instead I was embarrassed. Yet by the gods it was I, the shabby scholar, who had created Jason, and this silken, sulky dilettante who without reason had stabbed him!

While I peeped about, I was telling Edgerton, perhaps less deftly than I had planned, of my desire to be tutored.

He answered:

"You're very complimentary, I'm sure, but I'm afraid it's impossible. I'll recommend you to someone— By the way, what was your college?"

Heaven knows how it popped into my head, but I recalled an obscure and provincial school, Titus College, of which I knew nothing.

"Oh, really? Did you know I had my first instructorship in Titus? Haven't had any news from there for years. How is President Dolson, and Mrs. Siebel? Oh, and how is dear old Cassaworthy?"

May the trustees of Titus College forgive me! I had President Dolson sick of a fever, and Cassaworthy—professor, janitor, village undertaker, or whatever he was—taking to golf. As for Mrs. Siebel, she'd given me a cup of tea only a few months ago. Edgerton seemed astonished. I have often wondered whether Mrs. Siebel would actually be most likely to serve tea, gin, or vitriol.

Edgerton got rid of me. He amiably kicked me out. He smiled, gave me the name of a "suitable tutor," mesmerized me towards the door, and did not invite me to return.

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I spent the night at a not agreeable tavern or hotel, and next day I again called on Edgerton. I had surmised that he would be bored by the sight of me. He was. I begged him to permit me to look over his library. Impatiently, he left me alone, hinting, " When you go out, be sure and close the front door."

With the chance of someone entering, it would not have been safe to scurry through his desk and his ingenious cabinets in search of data regarding Jason. But while I stood apparently reading, with a pen-knife I so loosened the screws in a window-catch that the window could be thrust up from outside.

I was going to burglarize the study.

That night, somewhat after twelve, I left my room in the hotel, yawned about the office, pretended to glance at the ragged magazines, sighed to the drowsy night clerk, " I think I'll have some fresh air before I retire," and sauntered out. In my inner pocket were a screw-driver and a small electric torch.

I endeavoured, as I stole about the streets, to assume an expression of ferocity, to intimidate whoever might endeavour to interrupt me. For this purpose I placed my spectacles in my pocket and disarrayed my bow-tie.

I was, perhaps, thrown off my normal balance. For the good name of Jason Sanders I would risk all of serene repute that had been precious to me. So I, who had been a lecturer to respectful students, edged beneath the cottonwoods, slipped across a lawn, crawled over a wire fence, and stood in the garden of Whitney Edgerton. It was fenced and walled on all sides save towards the street. That way, then, I should have to run in case of eruption—out into the illumination of a street lamp. I might be very prettily trapped. Suddenly I was a-tremble, utterly incredulous that I should be here.

I couldn't do it.

I was menaced from every side. Wasn't that someone peering from an upper window of the house ? Didn't a curtain move in the study ? What was that creak behind me ? I do not remember a fear of being shot. It was something vaguer and more enfeebling : it was the staring disapproval of all my civilization, schools, churches, banks, the courts, and Quinta. 'But I came to the central window of the study, the window whose catch I had loosened.

I couldn't do it.

I touched the window ; I think I tried to push it up. It was beyond my strength.

Disgust galvanized me. I to thieve from the thief who had slain Jason Sanders ? Never ! I had a right to know his information ; I had a right. By heavens ! I'd shake it out of him ; I'd face, beat, kill that snobbish hound. I remember running about the corner of

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the house, jabbing the button of the bell, bumping the door panels with sore palms.

A light, and Edgerton's voice:

"What is it?"

"Quick! A man hurt! Motor accident!" I bellowed.

He opened the door. I was on him, pushing him back into the hall, demanding:

"I want everything you have about Jason Sanders!" I noticed then that he had a revolver. I am afraid I hurt his wrist. Later, when I had placed him in a chair in the study, I said: "Where did you get your data? And where did Sanders die?"

"You must be this idiot that's been responsible for the Sanders folderol," he was gasping.

"Will you be so good as to listen? I am going to kill you unless you give me what I wish, and immediately."

"Wh-what! See here!"

I don't remember. It's curious; my head aches when I try to recall that part. I think I must have struck him, yet that seems strange, for certainly he was larger than I and better fed. But I can hear him piping:

"This is an outrage! You're insane! But if you insist, I had all my facts about Sanders from Peter Williams, a clergyman out in Yancey, Colorado."

"Let me see your letters from him."

"Is that necessary?"

"Do you think I'd trust you?"

"Well, I have only one letter here. The others are in my safe-deposit vault. Williams first wrote to me when he read my letter criticizing your articles. He has given me a good many details. He apparently has some reason to hate the memory of Sanders. Here's his latest epistle, some more facts about Sanders's poetic career."

One glance showed me that this was indeed the case. The sheet which Edgerton handed me had inartistically printed at the top, "Rev. Peter F. Williams, Renewalist Brotherhood Congregation, Yancey, Colo.," and one sentence was, "Before this, Sanders's treatment of women in Kennuit was disgraceful—can't be too strongly condem'd."

I had the serpent of whose venom Edgerton was but the bearer!

I backed out, left Edgerton. He said a silly thing, which shows that he was at least as flustered as I was:

"Goodbye, Lieutenant Sandec!"

I was certain that he would have me apprehended if I returned to my hotel, even for so long as would be needed to gather my effects. Instantly, I decided to abandon my luggage, hasten out of town. Fortunately, I had with me neither my other suit nor the

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fitted bag which Quinta had given me. Traversing only side streets, I sped out of town by the railway track. Then I was glad of the pocket flashlight which, outside the study window, had seemed absurd. I sat on the railway embankment. I can still feel the grittiness of sharp-cornered cinders and cracked rock, still see the soggy pile of rotting logs beside the embankment upon which my flashlight cast a milky beam as I switched it on in order that I might study Peter Williams's letter.

Already I had a clue.

Peter Williams was also the name of that son of the Reverend Abner Williams of Kennuit whom Jason had often trounced. I wished that he had trounced him oftener and more roundly. The Reverend Abner had hurled Jason out of his church. All this would naturally institute a feud between Jason and the Williamses. There might have been additional causes, perchance rivalry for a girl.

Well! The Reverend Peter Williams's letter to Edgerton was typewritten. That modernity would indicate, in a village parson, a man not over forty years old. Was it not logical to guess that Peter Williams of Colorado was the grandson of Peter Williams of Kennuit, and that he had utilized information long possessed by the whole tribe of the Williamses to destroy his grandsire's enemy, Jason?

By dawn I was on the train; in the afternoon of the next day I was in Yancey, Colorado.

I found the Renewalist parsonage, residence of the Reverend Peter Williams, to be a small, dun-coloured cottage on a hill-crest. I strode thither, vigorous with rage. I knocked. I faced a blank Teutonic maid. I demanded to see Mr. Williams.

I was admitted to his rustic study. I saw a man not of forty, as his letter had suggested, but astoundingly old, an ancient dominie, as sturdy as a bison, with a bursting immensity of white beard. He was sitting in a hollowed rocker close by the stove.

"Well?" said he.

"The Reverend Peter Williams?"

"I be."

"May I sit down?"

"You can."

I sat calmly in a small, mean chair. My rage was sated by perceiving that I had to deal not with any grandson of Jason's foe, but with the actual original Peter Williams himself! I was beholding one who had been honoured by the fists of Jason Sanders. He was too precious a serpent not to draw him with cunning. I pursued:

"I was told—I once spent a summer on Cape Cod—"

"Who are you, young man?"

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" Smith, William Smith."

" Well, well, let's have it."

" I was told you came from the Cape—from Kennuit."

" Well, what of it ? "

" I just wondered if you weren't the son of the Reverend Abner Williams who used to be pastor in Kennuit."

" I be. I am the son in the spirit of that man of holiness."

Cautiously, oh, so cautiously, simulating veneration, I hinted :

" Then you must have known this fellow I've been reading about ; this Jason—what was it ?—Sandwich ? "

" Jason Sanders. Yes, sir, I knew him well, too well. A viler wretch never lived. A wine-bibber, a man of wrath, blind to the inner grace, he was all that I seek to destroy." Williams's voice loomed like a cathedral service. I ventured :

" One thing I've often wondered. They say this Sanders fellow didn't really die in Greece. I wonder when and where he did die."

The old man was laughing ; he was wrinkling his eyes at me ; he was shaking.

" You're daft, but you have grit. I know who you be. Edgerton telegraphed me you were coming. So you like Jason, eh ? "

" I do."

" He was a thief, a drunkard—"

" And I tell you he was a genius ! "

" You tell me ! Huh ! "

" See here, what reason has there been for your dogging Jason ? It wasn't just your boyish fighting and—how did you find out what became of him after he left Kennuit ? "

The old man looked at me as though I were a bug. He answered slowly, with a drawl maddening to my impatience.

" I know it because in his prison—" he stopped, yawned, rubbed his jaw—" in his cell I wrestled with the evil spirit in him."

" You won ? "

" I did."

" But after that—when did he die ? " I asked.

" He didn't."

" You mean Jason is alive now—"

" He's ninety-five years old. You see, I'm—I was till I rechristened myself Williams—I'm Jason Sanders," he replied.

Then for two thousand miles of train journey, sitting unmoving in berths and silent in smoking-rooms, I fled to the cool solace of Quinta Gates.

* * *

Poetry is the language in which man explores his own amazement. CHRISTOPHER FRY

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★*William Bartram was born in Philadelphia in* 1739, *and as a student of botany and natural history, travelled widely through the lush wilderness of unexplored Carolina and Georgia. In* 1791 *he published his "Travels," from which this vivid extract is taken.*

TRAVELLER'S TALE

by WILLIAM BARTRAM

THE noise of the crocodiles kept me awake the greater part of the night; but when I arose in the morning, contrary to my expectations, there was perfect peace; very few of them to be seen, and those were asleep on the shore . . .

Accordingly I got everything on board, charged my gun, and set sail, cautiously, along shore. As I passed by Battle lagoon, I began to tremble and keep a good look out; when suddenly a huge alligator rushed out of the reeds, and with a tremendous roar came up, and darted as swift as an arrow under my boat, emerging upright on my lea quarter, with open jaws, and belching water and smoke that fell upon me like rain in a hurricane; I laid soundly about his head with my club and beat him off, and after plunging and darting about my boat, he went off, on a straight line through the water, seemingly with the rapidity of lightning, and entered the cape of the lagoon.

I now employed my time to the very best advantage in paddling close along shore, but could not forbear looking now and then behind me, and presently perceived one of them coming up again; the water of the river hereabouts was shoal and very clear, the monster came up with the usual roar and menaces, and passed close by the side of my boat, when I could distinctly see a young brood of alligators, to the number of one hundred or more, following after her in a long train, they kept close together in a column, without straggling off to the one side or the other, the young appeared to be of an equal size, about fifteen inches in length, almost black, with pale yellow transverse waved clouds or blotches, much like rattle snakes in colour. I now lost sight of my enemy again.

Still keeping close along shore; on turning a point or projection of the river bank, at once I beheld a great number of hillocks, or small pyramids, resembling hay cocks, ranged like an encampment along the banks, they stood fifteen or twenty yards distant from the water, on a high marsh, about four feet perpendicular above

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the water ; I knew them to be the nests of the crocodile, having had a description of them before, and now expected a furious and general attack, as I saw several large crocodiles swimming abreast of these buildings.

These nests being so great a curiosity to me, I was determined at all events immediately to land and examine them. Accordingly, I ran my bark on shore at one of their landing spaces, which was a sort of nick or little dock, from which ascended a sloping path or road up to the edge of the meadow, where their nests were, most of them were deserted, and the great thick whitish egg-shells lay broken and scattered upon the ground round about them.

The nest or hillocks are of the form of an obtuse cone, four feet high and four or five feet in diameter at their bases ; they are constructed with mud, grass and herbage : at first the crocodiles lay a floor of this kind of tempered mortar on the ground, upon which they deposit a layer of eggs, and upon this a stratum of mortar, seven or eight inches in thickness, and then another layer of eggs, and in this manner one stratum upon another, nearly to the top : I believe they commonly lay from one to two hundred eggs in a nest : these are hatched, I suppose by the heat of the sun . . .

The ground for several acres about these nests shewed evident marks of a continual resort of alligators ; the grass was every where beaten down, hardly a blade or straw was left standing ; whereas, all about, at a distance, it was five or six feet high, and as thick as it could grow together.

The female, as I imagine, carefully watches her own nest of eggs until they are all hatched, or perhaps while she is attending her own brood, she takes under her care and protection as many as she can get at one time, either from her own particular nest or others : but certain it is, that the young are not left to shift for themselves ; having had frequent opportunities of seeing the female alligator, leading about the shores her train of young ones, just like a hen does her brood of chickens, and she is equally assiduous and courageous in defending the young, which are under her care, and providing for their subsistence ; and when she is basking upon the warm banks, with her brood around her, you may hear the young ones continually whining and barking like young puppies.

I believe but few of a brood live to the years of full growth and magnitude, as the old feed on the young as long as they can make prey of them.

The alligator when full grown is a very large and terrible creature, and of prodigious strength, activity and swiftness in the water. I have seen them twenty feet in length, and some are supposed to be twenty-two or twenty-three feet : their body is as large as that of a horse ; their shape exactly resembles that of a lizard, except

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their tail, which is flat or cuneiform, being compressed on each side, and gradually diminishing from the abdomen to the extremity, which, with the whole body is covered with horny plates or squammæ impenetrable when on the body of the live animal, even to a rifle ball, except about their head and just behind their forelegs or arms, where it is said they are only vulnerable . . .

When they clap their jaws together it causes a surprising noise, like that which is made by forcing a heavy plank with violence upon the ground, and may be heard at a great distance.

But what is yet more surprising to a stranger, is the incredible loud and terrifying roar, which they are capable of making, especially in the spring season, their breeding time; it most resembles very heavy distant thunder, not only shaking the air and waters, but causing the earth to tremble; and when hundreds and thousands are roaring at the same time, you can scarcely be persuaded, but that the whole globe is violently and dangerously agitated.

* * *

ANSWERS to OLD FAMILIAR PLACES on page 80

1. *Meryton, in "Pride and Prejudice," by Jane Austen.*
2. *Grantchester, in the poem "The Old Vicarage, Grantchester," by Rupert Brooke.*
3. *Dr. Strong's School at Canterbury, in "David Copperfield," by Charles Dickens.*
4. *Bermuda, in "Song of the Emigrants in Bermuda," by Andrew Marvell.*
5. *Levenford, in "Hatter's Castle," by A. J. Cronin.*
6. *"The Bell" at Edmonton, in "John Gilpin," by William Cowper.*
7. *Jamaica, in "A High Wind in Jamaica," by Richard Hughes.*
8. *Auburn, in "The Deserted Village," by Oliver Goldsmith.*

* * *

SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD on page 160

Across. 5, Hobble. 8, First prize. 9, Racing. 10, Dining room. 11, Ideals. 12, Vine Street. 17, Asp. 18, Aisne. 20, Fair. 22, Lake. 23, Worry. 24, Old. 26, Freebooter. 30, Senile. 31, Return fare. 32, Mohair. 33, Eyewitness. 34, Attest.

Down. 1, Rimini. 2, Aspire. 3, Spigot. 4, Limoges. 5, Hermit. 6, Bacteria. 7, Long lane. 13, Near. 14, Spry. 15, Razor. 16, Epode. 18, Alto. 19, Skit. 20, Foremost. 21, Irrigate. 25, Leather. 26, Ferret. 27, Barkis. 28, Offing. 29, Egress.

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SUMMER'S MUSIC

Cricket is an idea. It was an idea of the gods

SIR JAMES BARRIE, 1860-1937

Block, block, block,
At the foot of thy wicket, O Scotton !
And I would that my tongue could utter
My boredom. You won't *put the pot on !*
Oh ! nice for the bowler, my boy,
That each ball like a barndoor you play !
Oh ! nice for yourself, I suppose,
That you stick at the wickets all day !

And the clock's slow hands go on,
And you still keep up your sticks :
But oh ! for the lift of a smiting hand,
And the sound of a swipe for six !
Block, block, block,
At the foot of thy wickets, ah ! do !
But one hour of Grace or Walter Read
Were worth a week of you !

Parody of LORD TENNYSON'S " *Break, Break, Break* "
Author Unknown, 1886

Not Really Cricket!

Then the bell rang, and I climbed to the top of the Pavilion to watch Raffles bowl. No subtleties are lost up there ; and if ever a bowler was full of them, it was A. J. Raffles on this day, as, indeed, all the cricket world remembers. One had not to be a cricketer oneself to appreciate his perfect command of pitch and break, his beautifully easy action, which never varied with the varying pace, his great ball on the leg-stump—his dropping head-ball—in a word, the infinite ingenuity of that versatile attack. What I admired, and what I remember, was the combination of resource and cunning, of patience and precision, of headwork and handiwork, which made every over an artistic whole. It was all so characteristic of the other Raffles whom I alone knew !

" I felt like bowling this afternoon," he told me later—in the hansom. " With a pitch to help me, I'd have done something big ; as it is, three for forty-one out of the four that fell, isn t so bad for a slow bowler on a plumb wicket against those fellows. But I felt venomous ! Nothing riles me more than being asked about for my cricket as though I were a pro. myself."

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" Then why on earth go ? "

" To punish them . . . It seems they're going to have the very devil of a week of it—balls—dinner-parties—swagger house-party—general junketings—and obviously a houseful of diamonds as well. Diamonds galore ! As a general rule nothing would induce me to abuse my position as a guest. I've never done it, Bunny. But in this case we're engaged like the waiters and the band, and by heaven, we'll take our toll ! Let's have a quiet dinner somewhere and talk it over."

E. W. HORNUNG, 1866-1921, *Raffles*

Wherever You May Be

You may search the world all round,
But where Englishmen are found,
From the frozen Polar Ocean to the far Antipodes,
Where there's room to pitch a wicket
You will find us playing cricket,
For King Willow rules the meadows
As Britannia rules the seas.

Author Unknown

Things That Matter

A wonderfully English game is cricket. One morning at Kennington Oval the umpires walked magnificently on to the field a few minutes behind the clock. Then the Somerset men moved easefully into view, and, after another dignified lapse of time, out came two Surrey batsmen. Whereupon one of these engaged himself with the umpire over the urgent matter of taking his guard. It was easy to imagine the conversation : " Middle and leg as usual, Tom." " That's the off stump." " How's this ? " " Covers the leg." " That better ? " " Covers the two, 'Arry." " Thanks, Tom." Meanwhile the captain of Somersetshire, in earnest consultation with the bowler, had been waving his fieldsmen here and there ; a gesture from him and some man in white passed far away into the bleak distances of the Oval field. And all the time the crowd waited. And at length the game went on. And the first ball, bless us, upset a wicket which was the last Surrey wicket of the innings. Whereupon the cricketers all moved out of our ken once more, the umpires last and looking impressive. And the vast spaces of the Oval were empty again. Such is cricket—one sane thing anyhow in our mad world.

The fact is, cricket is more than a game. For one thing, it is part of summer.

NEVILLE CARDUS, *Days In The Sun*

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The Art of Watching Cricket

Many are the good spectators; few the bad; but the contentment of the good can be upset by a single vice of the bad. And there are three vices from which a bad spectator may suffer. There is he who cares to the point of boredom that his own side shall win; there is he who knows all and says so; and there is he who wishes he knew all and pretends he does. Which of these three vices is the worst I cannot say, I only know that at times I have met them all, and cursed their owners with might and main.

For the most part, however, spectators of cricket are the very best gathering of people it is possible to find, and providing we make due allowance for the company we keep, the most lovable.

JOHN ARMITAGE, in "*The Cricketer*"

To Every Cricket Lover . . .

The nostalgia for cricket seems a kind of madness to those who have it not. They come late in life or from foreign parts willing to be instructed in the mysteries, and, being instructed, are still inexpressibly bored: they cannot understand what we see in the game. The answer is that it is not the game only that we see, but childhood and youth, and peace of mind in the recollection of enduring things:

For the field is full of shades as I near the shadowy coast,
And a ghostly batsman plays to the bowling of a ghost,
And I look through my tears on a soundless-clapping host
As the run-stealers flicker to and fro,
To and fro :—
O my Hornby and my Barlow long ago!

A day at Lord's, with past welling up into the present, puts a bracket round controversy, and gives imagination release. There are two minds—the mind that keeps its eye on the ball, and the mind that ranges. "So then the princess threw the ball at one of her company: she missed the girl, and cast the ball into the deep . . ." Whereupon, it will be remembered, all of them, being women, raised a piercing cry, and the goodly Odysseus awoke and sat up, and observed that another wicket had fallen, Trumper was out, and the Eighth Arm had advanced on Carthage.

CHARLES MORGAN, *Reflections In A Mirror*

Over

There is no more suitable epitaph for the enthusiastic cricketer than the simple word "Over."

Author Unknown

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★*ON my shooting tract in Dorset I, ROGER TAINE, a respectable business man, accidentally killed a man. For my family's sake, in case I should be accused of murder, I buried the corpse in a rabbit warren.*

When I returned later to the shoot I met GENERAL PETER SANDORSKI, a Polish expatriate on the trail of an English revolutionary underground movement, involving a man known as PINK, HEYNE-HASSINGHAM, owner of the land I rented as a shoot, and his friend COLONEL HIART. These men were using my shoot as a landing strip for courier aeroplanes that flew in from the Continent after dark.

Sandorski and I decided to see these nocturnal activities for ourselves, and Sandorski had the inspiration of moving the portable beacons so that the plane would land in an unexpected spot. When this happened, Sandorski and I kidnapped the man who landed, and were pursued through the darkness by Pink.

Sandorski drugged our prisoner, LEX, and we hid his suitcase. When we had thrown off our pursuers we dug up the man I had killed, put him in Pink's car and burned it and the corpse.

The Last Part of

A ROUGH SHOOT

by GEOFFREY HOUSEHOLD

THE suitcase was recovered without difficulty. Lex, however, was not. I could have sworn that I knew where I put him, but every time I went confidently up to him, he either got up and turned out to be a sheep, or lay still and was a patch of dead weeds.

Well, we found him in the end. The silly blighter had partly recovered from the drug, walked a hundred yards or so, and tumbled down to sleep again by the stream. He came round when we lifted his slack body and shook it.

"It's all right," I encouraged him. "You're out of trouble now, you know."

He replied vaguely that he was very tired. Even with one of us on each side of him, he was too comatose to walk. He kept on grabbing at his bag and mumbling about his papers.

"How soon can you get your car?" Sandorski asked.

"Not enough time. The road may be watched in half an hour. Have you got any more in the bottle?"

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He had another ampoule. Lex couldn't help seeing him bring out the syringe. He stuttered "*No! No!*" in a cracked, terrified voice, but his will was completely paralysed. He even held out his arm.

Then began a melancholy procession across the road and up into the hills on the opposite side. I led the way, holding his ankles, and Sandorski followed with his shoulders. We tied his case on to his stomach. It was the only way to carry it.

I HAD determined to go to my house. I had at once to confess the whole truth to Cecily, or leave the most horrid doubts and worries in her mind as soon as she heard (and, with the morning milk, she would) of the burned car and its occupant—whom Sandorski had recognized as the renegade Riemann. I needed both the general and Lex to back up my story. My future was at stake in a very different way to that which I had feared for the last three weeks.

It was close on dawn when we entered my back gate. I put Sandorski and Lex in the shed at the bottom of the garden, with some brandy and a kerosene stove. Lex had a luxurious overcoat; I hoped that he also had a tough constitution.

Then I went upstairs and woke Cecily. I pulled the curtains and turned on her bedside light and told her I needed her help and patience. She started up, with that glow upon her of a woman who loves and is loved.

I said that I had a long story to tell her, and that I wanted hot food and blankets for two men in the shed.

"But why the shed?" she asked.

"Until the children go to school. They might talk."

"Nothing wakes the children." She smiled. "They will be fast asleep for another hour. Why not the spare bedroom?"

"Well, it's just possible that the house might be searched. I don't for a moment think it will be."

"Put them in the roof-space under the gable. It's warm up there. And if they don't move about, but stay over our room—"

I never dreamed she could meet the crisis so calmly. She had all the imaginative fears of a mother of young children. Nightmare after nightmare must have been already gathering under the loyalty which was natural to her and the discipline she imposed on herself.

We had to hurry. My back garden was hidden from the road, but in daylight it was in full view of the low line of the hills.

Sandorski laid Lex down inside the door as unaffectedly as if he had been carrying a parcel.

"Madame," he said. "I am proud to have met the husband of such a wife."

He kissed her hand, and she managed the receiving end like a Grand Duchess. She'd had it kissed innumerable times before, but never in that superb manner.

I put a ladder against the trap-door in the roof, and we hauled Lex up by a rope under his armpits. A mattress, blankets and a

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hot-water bottle followed. How the children slept through it I can't imagine, but they did.

Meanwhile, Cecily was getting tea and eggs ready in the kitchen—not an easy task in the semi-darkness. The lighting of her bedside lamp would pass, but when I had put it out I lit no others. Any evidence of early activity in the house had to be avoided.

In the grey and uncomfortable light of the dining room I began my story very irresolutely, and made a thorough mess of it. I didn't know how far Sandorski would like me to talk of his business, and, of course, I felt ashamed of that light-hearted shot at Riemann's expansive target.

"Colonel, my lad, tell her everything," Sandorski insisted. "Infantry—that's what you are all through! Won't take a gamble. Where would you be now if I hadn't driven your partridges for you, ha?"

"Fast asleep in bed," I said.

"Yes—with a damn bad conscience. And this lovely golden madonna of yours wondering what the devil had given you indigestion for the last fortnight. You should be grateful to me."

"*I* am," said Cecily.

"If you can still tell me that this evening, Mrs. Taine, I will believe in marriage."

"But you do."

She gave him a long look, the meaning of which I did not appreciate until she suddenly laid her hand on his.

"My children were the age of yours," he said. "They, too, slept well."

He put his head in his hands. It had been a hard night.

"Go on," Cecily ordered me quietly.

She was right. My story gave him time to recover. The grey day grew reluctantly. It was a winter dawn, not autumn.

When I had finished, Cecily looked very drawn and stern. She felt strongly that running about the downs with Polish generals in the middle of the night was not one of the duties of the father of a family. I pointed out that there was no phase of the action at which I could possibly have extricated myself. I don't think she agreed. There had, perhaps, been a little too much gusto in my account of the night's doings, and not enough repentance.

However, she turned on Sandorski.

"If you are going to stay here, general," she said, "you must promise me one thing."

"Anything," he answered gallantly.

"You must promise me that no harm shall come to the man you brought with you."

"My word of honour that no harm shall come to him under your roof," he replied.

"I didn't say anything about my roof. He's had enough, and you are not to do him any harm at all, now or afterwards."

"The devil! I don't even know what he's been up to."

"Nor do I. Or care."

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Sandorski thought for a few seconds. He took his word of honour so seriously that he had to draw up a sort of mental contract.

"I promise," he said, "that he shall not be killed or tortured or handed over to anyone but the British police by me or by my order. Will that do?"

"Yes," she said, and added illogically: "but I never even thought of such beastly things."

AFTER breakfast Cecily went up to the roof with the general and took Lex's pulse and temperature. He wasn't cold or shivering, and there didn't seem to be anything wrong with him. Sandorski said he ought to sleep for a few hours more. His first injection had been a stab in the dark. The second was carefully placed.

When the general had been settled in the loft with his patient, I gave him a rope for his future movements, took down the ladder, washed it and put it away. Then I went to bed, pretending the touch of 'flu that I had warned my clerk I was going to have, and Cecily woke the children. Before she gave them breakfast, she ran races with them—to get them warm, she said—through the back gate and across the meadow. That effectively destroyed the heavy tracks of Sandorski and myself. Then she carefully examined the shed at the bottom of the garden and removed all traces of occupation.

I didn't expect the police till the evening at earliest. I thought it would take them some time to make the connection between Blossom's land and the burnt car. But when I was about to get up and start the examination of Lex's suitcase with Sandorski, our local constable and his inspector called. Cecily received them downstairs. She was just taking the children to school. The inspector had more low cunning than I ever put to his credit. He chatted with the boys, and quickly found out that Daddy hadn't felt very well the night before and was still in bed.

The two policemen came up to my room, apologizing profusely. They didn't tell me what had happened. They said that another abandoned vehicle had been found on the upper road. I started to complain, with the querulousness of an invalid, that I had locked my garage at the usual hour and that I didn't see why I should be bothered for parking without lights if somebody pinched my car.

"Oh, it's not that, sir!" the inspector laughed. "Now, we understand from Mr. Blossom that you have rented the shooting over his land. Have you ever noticed anything peculiar up there?"

"I haven't. But, good lord, Blossom is there all the time! He could tell you better than I."

"He sent us to you, Mr. Taine. He was always busy, he said, but you had your eyes open."

Then, ruling me, I think, off his list of possible suspects, he came clean. He told me that a burnt car had been found with the body of an unknown male in it, that the police had had a report of the light of an aircraft being seen on Blossom's down, and that they had searched the down at first light and seen tracks of landing wheels. Had I ever noticed anything which might Lead Me To Believe . . .?

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Well, no, I hadn't.

"Are you ever up there at night, Mr. Taine?"

"No, of course not," I answered rather too sharply.

"Have you ever seen any sign of poachers?"

I disliked that line of questioning, but what he was after was to get at the names of possible poachers who might have been out at night, and might have noticed something.

At last they went away, leaving me gently sweating under my dressing-gown. It was convenient, however, to have the police out of the way at so early an hour. I rapped on the trap-door with a fishing rod as a signal for Sandorski to lower his rope and come down. He brought with him Lex's keys. We opened his suitcase.

IT was of expensive leather, beautifully fitted inside, and contained everything the painfully well-dressed man would require for the night—silk pyjamas, silk dressing-gown, liver salts in a silver-topped bottle, monogrammed hair brushes and a deliberately masculine smell. At the bottom, under a change of tasty socks and underclothing, was a brief-case.

It was a case of thin imitation black leather, apparently stuffed with papers. The lock, however, was good—not at all the bit of cheap metal which can be bent out with a wrench of the fingers. I didn't like that case; it seemed to me incongruous. I don't claim any instinct, or any particular powers of observation; but I do believe that you can't live through five years of very active service without developing a strong sense of self-preservation. The night's work had put me back in the old mood of treating unknown objects, whether a pin-up picture, a water-closet plug or a bottle of wine, with extreme care.

Sandorski chose a key, but it didn't fit. He was turning the key-ring for another when I picked up the brief-case and felt it.

"Do you really think this was what they hired a 'plane for?" I asked. "Why couldn't they have needed a 'plane just for Lex?"

"For Lex? They could get him in with a lot less trouble. Documents—these and whatever comes after, and the replies—that's what they need an air service for."

I wanted to be assured that the beastly case was really important. I was not at all eager to prove what I suspected unless it had to be done.

"All right," I said. "But this time it's going to be infantry tactics."

I went into the bathroom (taking the case with me, for I wasn't going to trust the impetuous Sandorski alone with it) and came back with a new razor blade. I held the top of the case firmly, and cut the seam which fastened the expanding pleats at the bottom to the stiffer side. The case was filled with loose paper, which I pulled out and Sandorski carefully preserved.

Meanwhile, I could feel under my left hand a hard cylinder, apparently attached to the side of the case. That confirmed my suspicion that there was a device of some sort connected to the lock—

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almost certainly a simple incendiary. When I had cleared the paper, I looked inside. The cylinder was an ordinary cardboard roll—the sort that one uses as a container for maps or blue-prints. It was tied over the open ends with tape and sealed with a lead seal. Fingers rather than eyes found a wire running through the tape into the centre of the cylinder and attached to the latch of the case. It looked as if slipping the catch or removing the roll would pull the wire.

Well, if the pulling of the catch pulled the wire—as it obviously did—there must be some way by which Lex could prevent it happening. I wished I had done a course on bomb disposal. I wished I had been in the garden. I wished, too, that we hadn't bought a new bedroom carpet.

I poked about inside the other end of the cylinder and, sure enough, I found a metal slide with a small knob on the end lying along the cardboard. Lex could have got at this knob from the outside of the case by thrusting a finger into the cheap, pliable material and feeling for it. He couldn't possibly have pulled it; so I put an overcoat over my face, in case I was wrong, and pressed it. It slid home with a comforting click.

There were probably no other risks, but I wasn't going to find out. I cut the stitches that held the cardboard roll to the side of the case, cut the tape, and slipped off the roll. Inside was a metal cylinder, rather larger than a fat fountain pen, still attached by its plunger wire to the interior of the latch. So far as I was concerned, it could stay attached.

I gave Sandorski full marks as a commanding officer. He had made none of his staccato and intelligent suggestions, and had remained perfectly quiet, confident and close to me through the whole business.

We withdrew the papers from their container, and unrolled them. They were important enough to justify the extreme precautions that senders and recipients had taken, and for Sandorski they completed the picture. We had:

1. List of cover names. This was without heading or remark, and was a fairly harmless document if kept apart from the others. It gave us the national leaders who were in correspondence with each other. I can't say they were very impressive, but they had this in common, according to Sandorski: that they were sincere.

2. Files of leading fascists who were still at large in Italy, Germany and the free countries of Europe, with notes on their reliability.

3. Propaganda directive for Heyne-Hassingham, with unintelligible code references which looked like dates for action.

4. A letter to Hiart asking for a report on the family connections, political sympathies and past of certain financiers in Sweden and America who had offered money.

5. Draft of an agreement for either signature or initialling by Heyne-Hassingham.

There it was, all the old stuff of the 1930's in a brand new dress! A revolution of the little man to answer the revolution of the littler

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man. There were to be simultaneous *coups d'état* in the states of western Europe, and the immediate promise of peace and unity; and until that millenium arrived, all the weapons of communism were to be used to defeat communism. For me and my like it merely meant that the flag over our concentration camp would be white instead of red.

The strength of the movement was in Hiart and his opposite numbers abroad. Since these officials were the most trusted servants of state, the damage they could do by collaborating with each other behind the backs of their governments was incalculable.

"That's the end of Heyne-Hassingham," I said. "Now we go straight to the police."

"Do we? Colonel, my lad, the value of all this just depends on my reliability and yours. Your security people get this sort of thing once a week. Wild political accusations. Just what you'd expect from a bunch of unemployed Polish officers. I might have forged all this—easily."

Up to then I had followed his lead blindly, for I was in such a mess that there was nothing else I could do; but now my responsibility, my duty, had become equal to his.

"No complications," I said. "I insist on immediate action."

He went all general, and treated me as if I had been some Polish officer who dared to question his patriotism. I didn't mind. I knew he was loosing off the accumulated strain of the last hour. He told me—if it can be called telling—that because he was anti-communist, it didn't mean he was a pro-fascist traitor.

"Patience, not politics!" he shouted at me. "Do you understand? Patience is what we need."

"We do," I said drily.

He barked at me, and fumed and fretted for a moment, trying, for the sake of his pride, to work up his temper again. It couldn't be done. He apologized with a most whole-hearted grace. His words were so gallant that they might have been addressed to a woman. The art of the apology has been lost in countries where the duel is out of fashion.

"I'll get off to London tonight," he said, "and take Lex with me."

"Will he go?"

"Go? Why not? Doesn't know where he is. Doesn't know who I am. Lex will come like a lamb so long as we don't frighten him. Look the blighter up!"

We found Lex on the list of cover names. He was a Czech of Austrian descent, and had been, in better days, a prominent lawyer with a taste for wild-cat politics. We also found Pink's true name. He was the tough and eccentric son of an obscure English peer, who had been fired out of the Navy for gross insubordination. Evidently he had been under the impression that he was Nelson.

Peter Sandorski boldly made his arrangements by telephone. There was no reason to suppose we were under any suspicion, and indeed at that time—which was about midday—we were not. He called a Whitehall number, and spoke to a friend named Roland,

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asking him to make arrangements for two air passages to Vienna and for a safe—he stressed safe—lodging meanwhile. It was clear that he had the connections to travel freely, even semi-officially. How far the secret services of western powers supplied him with funds, I do not know; but his organization of Poles and expatriates, playing for European peace and stability, must have been extremely useful.

When Cecily came back from her shopping and her children, she gave us a picnic lunch in the roof, and herself kept watch below. Lex returned to consciousness and gave little trouble. I think it was Cecily who put confidence into him. He couldn't believe that such a woman would feed him and fuss over him if anything were intended against his life or liberty. We told him that his suitcase was in a safe place, and lent him a razor. We also gave him a good story to the effect that we had had to drug him, so that if he were caught he wouldn't be able to talk until Heyne-Hassingham had an opportunity to tell him what to say.

OUR plan was simple, and I imagine it would have worked. I was going to sneak Sandorski and Lex into the garage after dark, make them lie in the bottom of the car till we were clear of the immediate neighbourhood, and then drive them to a bus stop. I couldn't drive them far, in case there was a police cordon round the district; if we were stopped and questioned, Lex, who spoke with a strong foreign accent and had no identity documents, would put the lot of us under suspicion. On a country bus, however, and then a train to London, it was certain they would pass through as any other citizens.

The children came back from school, and Cecily arranged to walk up to the village with them on an ice-cream expedition in order to get them out of the way while Sandorski and Lex descended from the roof. It was growing dark and she was just about to start, when we had another call from the inspector of police.

"We have been checking the footprints on Mr. Blossom's land, sir," he said after some polite preliminaries, "and we would like to get clear the people who had every right to be there. Would you mind showing me your shooting boots?"

Fortunately I had cleaned them. He took the measurements and a note of missing studs on the sole. He looked puzzled, but preserved a beautiful mask of official cordiality.

"When were you last at the northern end of the down?"

"Let me see," I said. "Where exactly do you mean?"

"A little east of the curve of the valley. There's a big holly bush half way down, if you remember."

"I know. I was there last Saturday."

"Not later?"

"No, inspector."

He was on to something, but I wasn't worried. I felt quite certain that the short, springy turf wouldn't reveal a measurable footprint, and certainly not the time when it was made.

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"Mr. Taine," he said, "suppose I were to tell you that I had good reason to believe you were on the down some time yesterday or last night?"

"My dear man, my wife and children have already told you that I was in bed with a touch of 'flu. And all yesterday I was in the office—and there are dozens of people to prove it. May I ask why you think I wasn't, or wouldn't it be professional?"

"I don't see why you shouldn't know," he answered. "I have two sets of prints, apparently yours, in wet cow dung. Now can you help me, Mr. Taine? We know perfectly well that your life is an open book and that you don't run secret aircraft."

Possibly I should have helped him. On the other hand, I didn't feel like explaining to my local inspector that I had first killed, then buried, then burnt an unknown male. That kind of thing was obviously better handled, if at all, on a high level, between Sandorski and his friend Roland.

"Well, but look here—how long does wet cow dung take to dry in damp weather? Surely that is a bit beyond the county police?"

"It's beyond me, Mr. Taine," he laughed. "But we've got some assistance from Scotland Yard on this case—and better still."

I said that I didn't know there was anything better than Scotland Yard.

He told me. After all, he was dead certain that I was innocent; and I was a respectable neighbour entitled, after all this trouble, to a bit of thrilling and confidential gossip.

"There's a gentleman staying with Mr. Robert Heyne-Hassingham. Catches spies, and all that. *You* know. Well, Mr. Taine, if you don't mind my taking your boots away with me, I'm sure they'll find that those prints were made on Saturday.

"And meanwhile, Mr. Taine—just as a matter of form—I'm afraid I must ask you to be at home or at the office tomorrow. And I'll bring you a statement to sign in the morning."

WHEN he had gone, I got Sandorski down at once from the roof.

"Peter," I said, "there was a policeman here. It will take him twenty minutes to get back to county headquarters, and about ten minutes after that Hiart will know it was me. Now what?"

He opened a rapid fire of questions and got the position clear.

"Hiart is trying an impossible bluff," I insisted. "I have only to produce those documents, and you to back me up."

"Colonel, my lad, Sandorski forged them. Sandorski told you a yarn. Sandorski got you to help him land a 'plane. Sandorski and you murdered the man who came in it. Can you prove that isn't true?"

"The beacons," I said.

"My lad, they used gloves, and we were in a hurry and didn't."

"Lex, then."

"Hiart thinks Lex is dead. He'll get a shock when he finds he

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isn't. But he'll manage to have a word with him before the police."

"But it's a nightmare."

"I've never put the blame on the staff," he said, "and I'm not going to start now. I'll keep you out of it."

I didn't like the idea of surrender, and I told him so.

"Too many non-combatants about," he replied, nodding his head towards the uproarious noise that was coming from the living-room. "They have no business in this sort of thing."

"I'm going to give 'em a better world than this, even if I go to gaol for it."

Sandorski shot out a hand to me for silence. His left eye sparkled with life, showing up the artificial right in fierce contrast that I had never noticed before.

"Lex!" he said. "Quick!"

He did the rope trick into the roof, with me after him.

"Lex, if we can get you away from here, where do you go?"

He used Lex's real name, which I needn't repeat. That gave the man confidence.

"Where I go? Why?"

"The police are on to us. But there's still a chance of delivering your bag. Where were you to go if the 'plane made a forced landing?"

"Why don't you know?" Lex replied stolidly.

"Because my orders were to take you here. But it's bust open, my lad. It's hot. We've got to get out."

Lex thought it over and decided to trust us.

"Flat 9, 26, Fulham Park Avenue, London."

"Who do you ask for?"

"I think empty. I have keys."

"Get a stiff needle and black thread from your missus," Sandorski ordered me. "And tell her to hop it now with the children. If we can get Lex to London, we'll beat 'em yet."

I left Sandorski to tidy up the roof space.

"Go out now with the children, my darling," I said to Cecily, "and get them that ice-cream. When you come back, we shan't be here. But Hiart will be, and the police. They are bound to find out that someone was in the roof, but say you knew nothing about it. Say I was certainly behaving oddly, but stick to your story that I never went out last night. When you took the children to the village, I said I would follow you in a minute, and we'd have a quick one at the local. Got it?"

"But where will I be able to find you?" she cried.

"Safe as can be. In the hands of the police. But I don't want to be caught till we've sunk this People's Union for good and all."

Our parting wasn't as sentimental as either of us would have liked, but one gets used to that in a family. The children were exasperating. They were deep in a game and decided that they didn't want ice-cream. They wouldn't put on their coats. A hat couldn't be found. And all the time the precious minutes were ticking away. My last view of George was of the little scamp dragging back on Cecily's firm hand, and howling loudly.

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I TURNED off all the lights, and went out to reconnoitre the garden and the back.

I quietly unlocked the garage door. Lex slipped in, keeping to the shadows, and lay down in the back of the car where we covered him with a rug and his splendid overcoat. Sandorski threw in the brief-case, wrapped up in a brown paper parcel, and told him what it was. At the last moment he dashed back into the house to cut the telephone wires.

It was now six-fifteen, and exactly half an hour since the inspector had left. We couldn't have more than a minute or two to get away. As a matter of course I turned to the right, up the valley, for I couldn't go the other way in case I ran slap into the police car racing out from Dorchester; but I had barely changed up into top before Sandorski shouted:

"Stop! Damn! Straight into the net! Rabbits! Attack, ha? Attack, even if you've got to run! Turn the car round and put out your lights, my lad."

When I had obeyed, he explained that just as soon as the Yard man and Hiart compared those boots of mine with a plaster cast, they would be pretty sure that I and my companion, if I had one, would try to escape. Any available police would at once be ordered by telephone to keep an eye on the road we were following. The police car itself could stop the other end of the road.

I climbed up the bank to watch. I didn't have long to wait. Indeed, the lights of the cars were already in sight. There were two of them. They stopped outside my darkened house. I could hear the police hammering on the door. Then they went round to the back, and the lights were switched on. The cars had left plenty of room on the road. I tore past them, with the needle of the speedometer jumping from twenty to sixty. I was keeping my eyes on the road. Sandorski said that everyone was in the house or at the back, and that the only people to see us were the drivers of the police cars.

I reckoned that one of the drivers would run into the house, that somebody would then jump for the telephone and discover that the wires were cut, and that only then would one of the cars turn and give chase.

That gave me a start of at least one minute, and probably three, and I felt reasonably sure of holding it even against the brilliant driving of the police. I went along that road to my office, by car or bicycle, nearly every day of my life, and I knew every twist and narrowing. I decided to stick to it, and not to jam myself in the lanes.

I did the seven miles to the outskirts of Dorchester in eight minutes. Sandorski reported nothing in sight behind. At the bottom of the town was a fork, and there I turned sharp left, going back more or less parallel to the road I had come on, and separated from it by flat water meadows.

There I drove sedately like any family farmer returning home. I saw the lights of a fast car hurling along the road we had just left, and gambled that the police would also see my lights, and decide that it couldn't be me. That was what happened. Sandorski reported

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that the police car had rushed straight on up the hill into Dorchester.

Now we sailed away northwards over the downs, passing little traffic and, thank heaven, no village bobby to notice our number. Not that he need bother with numbers. My car was a smart light grey, and horribly conspicuous at night.

WHEN I thought we were likely to have passed out of the probable area of search, I turned into a lane and stopped. Far beyond us, of course, there would be check points or roving patrol cars to cut us off from London, but we were now between the lines with time to think.

I told Lex to come up and take a breather. He put out an unhappy and disgusting head.

"I vos ill," he said.

"All for the cause!" exclaimed Sandorski.

"Go and wash your face," I said. "I can hear a stream down there to the right somewhere."

I had grabbed a bottle of rum as last-minute baggage, and when Lex had gone we had a couple.

"One thing I didn't have time to tell you," the general remarked. "Mustn't use our names before this chap."

"I haven't, I think. Nor you—except that you will call me colonel. But that's all right, as nobody else does."

"We'll make it," he said.

"We'll want a lot of luck. Do you realize I've got to stop for petrol somewhere?"

"And I've got to telephone."

"What on earth for?"

"Didn't I tell you?"

"You told me to get out of the house and bring a needle and thread."

"That's to sew up Lex's brief-case," he explained. "Must be in decent condition when he delivers it to Heyne-Hassingham."

"Lord! Can you arrange that?"

"Yes, of course. And room wired for sound. If I ask for a chance to prove my innocence I'll get it. Enough influence for that, ha?"

It was a wild scheme, but I could see that if we could deliver Lex to that flat at 26, Fulham Park Avenue it might succeed. It seemed to me, however, that our chance of ever reaching London was slim. In the course of the night the movements of my grey car were certain to be reported by some policeman.

The telephoning had to be tackled as soon as possible before the description of me and my car had been circulated too widely. It was improbable, we thought, that the police had any description of Sandorski or even his name. Hiart wouldn't tell them, for he couldn't be sure that Sandorski was in England at all, and he was not likely to commit himself when he didn't know what questions he would have to meet.

Lex came back from the stream, pale and dirty, but looking

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slightly more like a travelling lawyer than a criminal. I drove on, steering a slow and uncertain course through the by-roads. I was trying to find a safe route round Salisbury, well to the north of it.

We crossed the main road to London between Sherborne and Shaftesbury, using quite unnecessary caution. Half a mile further on, running through Hinton FitzPaine, we saw a telephone kiosk just clear of the last houses. It seemed to be as remote as any, so I drove up a stony little lane, where there was certain to be no traffic at that time of night, and where we could safely wait while Sandorski went into the village.

I COULDN'T go with him. Lex was the difficulty. We couldn't very well walk off with the brown paper parcel for which he was responsible. On the other hand, we didn't want to leave him alone with it. So I had to stay.

"Have you got enough small change?" I yelled after the general.

He was doubtful, so I emptied my trouser pocket into his. There was a fair supply of shillings and sixpences and coppers—enough for a couple of trunk calls to London.

I sat there for half an hour talking to Lex. He was a lot more likeable than his ideas—a solemn and mistaken crusader, but definitely a crusader. He still believed that—possibly with himself as chancellor—a despotism could be benevolent. So, I suppose, did Heyne-Hassingham on condition that he was the despot.

When I heard Sandorski stamping up the lane, I was already beginning to get anxious. I nipped out of the car to meet him. He was quivering with nerves and temper. Even his footsteps were dancing and angry, like those of a vicious horse.

"Gone to the Club!" he informed me in a sort of stifled scream. Then he imitated the voice of the telephone operator, and I thought he would burst his arteries.

"Another one and tuppence, please. Damn their one and tuppences! Damn! Damn! Damn! Got the bloody Club. Porter couldn't find him. Put another sixpence in the box, please. I hadn't got one. Colonel, it is the end!"

"Here, let me have a go!" I said. "I'll come with you."

"How do we get change?"

"At the pub, of course."

"What about that?"—he nodded towards Lex. "Or have you cut his puking, blasted throat before the . . . hangman breaks it?"

"That governess of yours was a remarkable woman," I said. "Now listen, Peter; Lex is nearly asleep. Patience!"

I got him back into the car.

"We have to wait an hour," I said to Lex. "And there's nothing to do. So why not relax?"

I suppose the next ten minutes must have been as exasperating as any in the general's whole life. I myself kept up the air of tranquillity so determinedly that I actually dozed, and was awoken by a savage dig from Sandorski.

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It was quarter to nine. Lex, bruised, worn out and still dopy, was fast asleep. We extracted the brown paper parcel and ran down into Hinton FitzPaine.

I went into the pub and ordered a rum—since it was what I had been drinking—and offered a note in payment. Of course, I got three half-crowns, which were no good for the slots in the telephone box. I ordered another drink—for I didn't want to ask outright for shillings and sixpences—and in my eagerness to attract the attention of the landlord pushed further into the room.

It was the foulest piece of bad luck, equal to all that careless and insanitary cow had brought on me. I ran into the county surveyor who was having a quick one on his way home from the inspection of some miserable local drainage scheme.

"Well, if it isn't Roger Taine!" he roared, exploding my name from the smoke around the darts board.

I hoped the local policeman wasn't in the bar. I watched the room rather than the surveyor, and met the fixed stare of a man sitting on the settle along the opposite wall. He composed his face, and looked away with a slight flush. He was a bad actor; but I doubt if I, in the horrified surprise of hearing my name, was any better.

My confounded friend shoved his way round the table towards me. I told him that I was in a desperate hurry, but I had to have a drink with him. The man on the settle waited a minute, and then got up and passed the length of the bar, saying casually and rather loudly to the landlord that he was going to call his wife. The telephone was out of sight, on the wall of the passage that led out to the scullery and the beer barrels.

"I'm sure I know that man," I said to the landlord.

I didn't, of course, and didn't want to. He was a type I don't care for—worn and frustrated and keeping up a smart grey moustache to compensate for his general air of genteel futility.

"Likely you would, sir. He keeps the filling station and café on the main road. Looks like Aladdin's cave in the pantomime. Teddy Bear's Picnic he calls it, 'cos 'is name is Edward Bear. Ah, 'e's a one, 'e is! Ever heard of the People's Union?"

"Why, let me see . . ."

"Didn't think you would 'ave! But we *has* to hear of it. Mr. Bear is the county secretary, he is. I don't allow no politics in 'ere. Still, his People's Union don't 'ardly count as politics. More like one of them last-day religions if you ask me."

IT wasn't surprising that Hiart had mobilized any of his People's Union stalwarts who might be of use. It was also possible that the police, as a matter of routine, had warned filling stations on the main road. I escaped from the pub, while the chorus of approval was going on, and found Sandorski fuming at the corner of the village street.

"I know, but listen!" I said. "I've been recognized. There's a man who mustn't see a stranger telephoning. I'm going to lead

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him away. I'll give you ten minutes to finish and get back to the car. Don't be longer."

I poured a stream of small change into him, and hurried up the street again to the pub. I was only just in time to draw the attention of Mr. Edward Bear who was looking for my car. I pretended not to notice him, and walked out of the village in the direction of the main road. He followed, but let the distance between us grow too far. It was a lonely road and pitch dark, and he wasn't used to trailing murderers. It was a bit different from distributing pamphlets.

Where a farm track crossed the road I allowed him to lose me. He made half-hearted darts up the three possible ways I might have gone. Then he stood at the cross-roads, mumbling to himself. This was annoying. I had given Sandorski his ten minutes, and the ten lengthened into twenty. Then it occurred to me that he wasn't waiting in pure indecision, but for somebody's arrival. I did not know what to do. To break cover and bolt was far too compromising.

I heard a car coming down the road. Mr. Bear stood in the shaft of light and waved. The car stopped. Inside were Hiart, Pink and a driver. Hiart got out.

"Well, Bear?" he said in his high-pitched voice. "Well? I thought you were to wait for us at the inn. You must get used to obedience, you know. You're working for the State now, not the Party. Good practice for you!"

"I followed him here," said Bear sulkily, for he had been expecting praise.

"Here? Here?"

Mr. Bear explained rapidly what had happened. He was a tiresome little bundle of pretences, but, if you come to think of it, he had shown a heap of guts.

"Then his car is up one of these two tracks," said Pink.

"Oh, nonsense!" Hiart exclaimed, his voice leaping to an offensive falsetto on the first syllable. "You haven't heard a car, Bear, have you? No! Well, if he knew he was followed by you, he'd have driven off very fast. And if he didn't know he was followed, he'd have driven off normally."

It was no wonder that Hiart was disliked. And he was ten times more exasperating because he was always right.

"Taine is probably behind the hedge," Pink said, "with a gun trained on you."

Hiart jumped to the other side of the car: Fortunately Pink didn't test his theory; for I *was* behind the hedge.

Hiart turned to Bear. "What was he doing in the pub?"

"Having a drink, of course," Pink interrupted impatiently. "Why not?"

"Nonsense! Nonsense! That's a risk Sandorski would never have allowed."

"You've got Sandorski on the brain," Pink answered. "Taine burned up Lex, and therefore he shot Riemann, and we don't know who put him up to it, because you didn't stop to see. And I rather think Riemann is alive—unless you shot him yourself and know he

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isn't. Bear, since you have been here, have you heard a car leave the village?"

"No, sir."

"Then they are still here, and somewhere on the other side of the houses."

They all got into the car and drove down into the village. I ran after them as close as I dared. They stopped at the pub and went inside—no doubt to find the surveyor and confirm my identity.

IN that one street, it was difficult to pass the car and its driver. All I could do was to enter the inn yard, go round behind the building and come out again into the open with my back to the car. I walked unsteadily and gave a loud belch of satisfaction as if I were bound homewards from the side door. As soon as I had passed out of the range of the one village light, I ran for my car.

Sandorski's mood had changed. He was still on edge—but merely because he couldn't think what had happened to me. Otherwise he was purring with pleasure. He had at last got hold of his friend, Roland, who had promised to prepare the flat at 26, Fulham Park Avenue forthwith.

In the silence of the night I heard Hiart's car pull away from the village pub. If I reversed down the lane I should arrive at the corner about the same time as they did. If I stayed where I was, I feared they would have a look at the tempting mouth of the lane and walk far enough up it to find us.

So there was nothing for it but to go on up the hill, and pray that we didn't find ourselves in a *cul-de-sac*. As we went I tried to tell Sandorski—without very much success—what had happened. For Lex's benefit I called our pursuers the deviationists. At any rate I made it clear that they were not the police.

The lane was so narrow that I could drive without lights. The hedges on each side brushed the wings, and loose stones crackled and spurted under the wheels. The gradient at the worst places must have been one in four. The noise of our progress in bottom gear attracted Hiart and Pink. Sandorski reported lights behind us.

At the top was a stout five-barred gate. The general jumped out and opened it. We went on. The lane ended and we bumped over some sort of grass track. I had to use my lights. They revealed nothing but more grass and ruts.

THIS was not the sort of situation that suited Sandorski, for we dared not show fight. By one of his favourite rearguard actions we had everything to lose. If Lex were caught and his papers recovered, nothing could save us from the dock. Still better for Hiart and Heyne-Hassingham was our death. That would be the end of any evidence on what had really happened at my shoot, and Hiart—if he arranged things to prove self-defence and could put his fingers in his ears at the critical moment—would be thanked by the police for his gallant chase.

I came to a cow-trampled mud-hole where the ruts petered out.

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Beyond the hole were two roughly stopped gaps. Both led to cultivated fields. This looked uncommonly like the end. I turned off my lights and got out of the car, waiting to recover my night sight.

The car behind us had stopped to go through the gate. I heard it shut again behind them. I let them drive on towards me, for the ruts leading into blackness would take their attention away from anything that might be happening in the outer dark. Then I turned my car to face the open grass and shot off into the night like a 'plane taking off. It sounds dangerous, and it was. On the other hand one somehow knows, in a countryside that forms part of one's blood, what the sweep of the land is likely to be. I merely mean that I knew I should meet an obstruction before I went over the edge of anything, and that the obstruction would be soft.

We had the devil's own luck. I missed a pond by inches, and then went slap through a barbed wire fence into a field of kale. It couldn't have been better. The kale was high enough and formed a dark enough mass for me to begin to brake in time. When we hit it, we merely crashed for a few yards through the soft stalks.

On the damp ploughland it took time to reverse and turn. Lex and Sandorski jumped out to push, but what really saved us were the fibrous stumps of the kale, which gave just enough purchase for the back wheels.

When I had pulled out, and back through the gap in the fence, I stopped for the two to get in. Meanwhile Hiart and Pink had followed up the ruts to the mud-hole. There they picked up our tracks in their lights, and came nosing along them. They were now something less than three hundred yards away. They couldn't see us, for the bushes at the edge of the pond I had just missed were partly in the way, and the background and skyline were broken; but undoubtedly they would pick us out as soon as we moved. Sandorski told Lex to lie on the floor, and folded himself into a small tense spring between the dashboard and the front seat.

I started rolling gently over the field towards the lane. The movement, as I feared, attracted attention, and the two great eyes of the following car swivelled round until they were full on my side. They rested there a couple of seconds as Hiart's driver swung round in a quarter circle to keep me in view. Then he quickly turned the full semi-circle, and lit up the rolling field ahead.

"He's going for the gate!" yelled Sandorski.

Of course he was. I might have betted Hiart would think of that. Once he had his car across the gate or in the lane, there was no way out for us except on foot.

My course into the kale had taken me more or less diagonally across this great field or down. I now had to run parallel to its lower boundary in order to reach the gate, and at some time I had to swing well out into the field in order to go through. What the boundary was, I don't know. The thick black shadows looked like a young plantation. At any rate, it was something impassable to cars, and I had it looming fifty yards to my left. To my right, and about two hundred yards away, was Hiart's car.

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On went my headlights. They showed good grass ahead, and I pulled up level. For a second or two we were racing on lines not quite parallel that would intersect at the gate. Then our courses rapidly converged. I couldn't avoid it. I was driving along the obstruction to my left, and it was curving and forcing me closer to Pink.

I had one vast advantage over Pink's driver. I was running for my life, and he wasn't. A split second before I got jammed against the edge of the plantation, I braked hard and passed behind them and took the outer berth. My car had terrific acceleration in second, and I pulled up level again at the cost of a few leaves of a spring. There weren't more than twenty yards between us, and Pink took a shot at me. I think it must have been meant for the tyre, for he would find it hard to satisfy the police that a shot at obvious fugitives was in self-defence. It went through the rear window and nearly got Lex, who was being tossed under his coat from floor to air and back again.

I don't suppose we ever went much above thirty miles an hour, but over that surface the speed was as alarming as eighty on a bad road. I closed in on them from the outside in order to wreck the driver's nerves and force him into the plantation I had just escaped. Then I heard Pink's quarter-deck voice:

"Ram him, Jimmy!"

The driver must have been a naval man, too. His quick response was worthy of the Service. I turned away and skidded, and he just touched my back bumper. I heard Pink open up with his forward turret. This time he only scored the number plate and a ricochet off the wing which starred my driving window and frightened me into an extra burst of speed.

Pink was so pleased to have something to shoot at that he stayed on my tail a second too long. He allowed me to get so far out into the field that I could go for the gate. I could see it now. It was shut. I've seen a galloping horse miss his jump and shatter a five-barred gate without breaking his legs. I prayed that my car would do the same, and roared straight at it. Pink, too late, cut across behind. He was only two or three lengths away, and it seemed certain that this time he must ram me broadside on before I could be through. By how much he missed me I don't know. There was a crash and a lot of flying wood; then another crash as Pink's car hurtled into the hedge; and I found myself shooting down the lane, fighting to control the car as it bounced from one bank to the other.

Near the bottom of the lane I slithered and scraped to a stop, and told Sandorski that we were out. He uncurled himself, and straightened painfully into the front seat. Lex remained groaning and muttering in the bottom of the car. I began to feel sorry for the poor man.

THE question now was: should we turn left at the bottom of the lane into the unknown, or right and up to the main road through Hinton FitzPaine?

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"How many people were there in the car?" he asked.

"The two you know and the driver."

"Not the man you call Teddy Bear?"

"No."

"Then they left him behind to telephone the police."

"If he did, we're mighty near the end," I said. "One of the springs has gone completely, and we must be nearly out of petrol."

He bounced into the lane, and beckoned me to join him where Lex could not hear what we said.

"Why not telephone for a car?" he suggested.

"What the hell are you talking about?"

"Telephoning for a car, colonel, my lad. Mr. Heyne-Hassingham's secretary speaking—ha? Hiart's car smashed up. Wants another to take him to London at once. Heil People's Union! Off we go! Why not?"

I looked at my watch and shook it. It was working all right. What I couldn't believe was that only some fourteen minutes had passed since I rejoined Sandorski and started up the lane. Still, it was enough for a patrol car to have arrived, if one was coming at all.

"Isn't it possible that Hiart saw his chance to settle accounts with us alone?" I asked. "It would be a godsend to him if he could keep the police out of it. Suppose he just sent Bear home to stand by for orders?"

"Home? Pub after all that excitement! Come on!"

We drove hard through the village and stopped a little distance up one of the tracks at that cross-road where Bear had met Hiart and Pink. Sandorski jumped out and ran back to Hinton FitzPaine. He went straight to the pub and hauled out Bear, who of course didn't know him and had no description of him. Bear didn't hesitate. He couldn't possibly doubt any man who knew as much about his recent movements as Sandorski did; and I expect he remembered Hiart's remarks on getting used to obedience.

They came striding past the cross-roads, with Bear chattering away in a state of tremendous excitement. I cleared my car of all possessions and followed with Lex at a reasonable distance. We walked along the main road until Teddy Bear's Picnic came in view. Then I parked Lex behind a tree, and went forward to reconnoitre. I had his brown paper parcel. He was no longer worrying about it.

Teddy Bear's Picnic consisted of three loathsome arches facing the petrol pumps and the main road. The doors of the centre arch were open, and the blaze of light revealed a too ambitious and untidy workshop, with Mr. Bear pouring oil into a six-seater limousine. Sandorski was strolling up and down the road, giving an excellent imitation of an important and impatient politician. He was keeping a careful watch on the hedgerow, and when I waved a handkerchief, he came over and whispered the news.

It was good and bad. Hiart's driver had telephoned to the garage for a car and had been answered, after much delay, by Mrs. Bear. That put our *bona fides* beyond a doubt. The driver must have been in the telephone box when Sandorski and Bear came out

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of the pub. He had left it to Mrs. Bear to get hold of her husband. It was a safe assumption that he had also telephoned the police, so that a patrol car could be expected any minute.

I was hesitant about the car stealing.

"People's Union require me to drive!" Sandorski assured me, "and People's Union pay cash down for hire. Where's the stealing? Nip up the road with Lex and bundle in when I come abreast of you."

Sandorski kept Bear occupied while we sneaked past the garage along the grass verge of the road. Lights came tearing towards us, and I shoved Lex down in the ditch and joined him. A black saloon whistled smoothly past us, and I saw inside it the peaked caps of the police. We hadn't much time—perhaps five minutes before the cops joined Hiart and Pink at the top of the lane, and anything up to quarter of an hour before somebody got on to Bear to find out why the car hadn't arrived. Twenty miles to Salisbury. We might just have time to reach the town before the make and number of our limousine reached the patrol cars and the constables on point duty.

When I had experienced a few minutes of Sandorski's driving, I had no doubt that we should make Salisbury if we didn't die horribly first.

SALISBURY streets were comforting, and not only because at last I could relax. The pubs were just closing. There were people about, people among whom we could be lost.

"Where to?" the general asked.

I directed him out of the centre into quiet residential streets. A dark house with a longish drive looked tempting. We ran the car into the drive, turned off the lights and left it.

What to do now? Sandorski was all for stealing a car, but I wouldn't have it. Hiring was too dangerous, for the police would certainly do the round of garages. Hitch-hiking? Well, if Sandorski and I had been alone, we might have tried to stop a friendly lorry-driver on the outskirts of the town. But Lex was nearly finished—he kept on saying he was sorry, but that he wasn't used to such exertion.

"We're not far from the station," I said. "Shall we chance it?"

It was a pretty desperate chance, for Sandorski's description as well as mine would now be known. I went first, leaving the general and Lex in the shadows behind the parcels office. If I were arrested, there was still hope that they might get through and do our business at 26, Fulham Park Avenue.

There were no police in the booking office or on the platform. Though we could never be sure of it, we were always a few minutes ahead of the pursuit. Organization takes time and there aren't always enough police.

The ticket window was open, so there was a train due. I borrowed Lex's hat, glasses and overcoat, made my height as small as I could, and bought three tickets to London. As we crossed the bridge over the lines, a train came in from the west. There was another, apparently just about to start, going to Southampton. This was a gift, and singly and unobtrusively we entered it.

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The cross-country train rumbled down to the coast untroubled, its few passengers gay or snoring. We had a compartment to ourselves. Lex, once more wrapped in his overcoat, dozed. Sandorski and I kept a careful look-out as the train stopped at the dim-lit country stations. None showed any curiosity about us. There was nothing we could have done if they had.

We were under no illusions. The police would surely have taken an interest in three tickets to London, booked just at the critical time, and three vaguely seen men, two of whom were of the right build. When they hadn't found us on the London train, it seemed likely that they would put a routine check on Southampton station. If we weren't there either, then we must be still in Salisbury.

And so Sandorski took another of his cavalry decisions. When the train stopped about a third of a mile outside Southampton Central, he gave a quick look up and down the line, and ordered us out.

As soon as I had lowered Lex to the ground, I felt that Sandorski had merely multiplied our chances of being caught. But he did nothing by halves. He dived between the wheels and lay flat on the permanent way, and we had to follow him. It was so swift and sensible, provided you could forget—as I could not—the chance of the train starting while one of us was wriggling over the rails. Then the train pulled out over our heads.

IT wasn't a promising stretch of line. On both sides of it were difficult fences, and beyond them wide deserts of waste ground. The only cover was a line of coal trucks in a siding. A mile away were the flood-lit funnels of the liners. I had a lovely daydream of being on board with Cecily and the children.

"You've done it this time," I said. "Easier to make New York than London."

"We'll take a boat train. Why not?" he answered cheerfully.

"Because there aren't any at this time of night."

"Then, colonel, my lad, we'll stop a train!"

"How?"

"Red light. Or do they use green lights in England?"

"Suppose there's an accident?"

"Nonsense! Why should there be? Eh, Lex?"

"Accident to other people, not so?" asked Lex hopefully.

"You'll be in it, too, my boy," said Sandorski. "Got a bit of red paper, Colonel? Where's that torch of yours?"

I stopped sulking, and began to think. If he stopped a train, there would be a determined search for the culprit, and the police might put two and two together.

"You always do the right thing," I said, "and then go plumb crazy when it works. Look here, if we went to Southampton by train, that's the only train we could have taken. We weren't on it, so the cops go home to bed. If we're cautious, we can use the station."

The line was open and bare of possible cover, and it was absolutely essential to reach the station unnoticed. If we could, and if we

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found a place to wait for a London train, we should be clear of pursuit at last.

I went up the line to explore, leaving Lex and the general under cover of the coal trucks. Quarter of a mile up the line was a signal box blazing with light, and beyond that the white gleam of the station and the dots of red and emerald on the tracks. I trotted from sleeper to sleeper, ready to drop flat at any moment, until I was under the wall of the box. That was the end of the advance. I might, perhaps, have tried to stalk the station if I had had only myself to consider, but there was no hope of getting the lumbering, overcoated Lex past the box and all the lights and on to the bare platform without some official shouting at us.

I went back down the line and started to climb the fence into the waste ground between railway and docks. After crossing the waste ground and another fence, I came out on to a road. It passed over the railway by a bridge, on each side of which were the approaches to the up and down platforms—spacious, well-lit, and empty but for a solitary taxi. There were two massive cops outside the entrance to the up booking office. While I watched them, they moved off. To us it didn't much matter whether they stayed or not. The railwaymen, mildly busy on the platforms, had certainly been warned to keep an eye open for fugitive murderers.

I leaned over the parapet of the bridge. The tracks and the roofs over the platforms were immediately below me. The roofs were accessible, easily accessible, and couldn't be seen from ground level. Was there any hope of a route, and a refuge at the end of it? I saw several fantastic answers, and one that might be practical. In a bay alongside the down platform was a big empty restaurant-car. If we could reach it, we could wait as long as we liked behind it or under it. The back of the car was close up against the wall of the station buildings, and in deep shadow.

Before I committed Lex and Sandorski, I decided to reconnoitre the route. The road appeared to be empty. I climbed on to the parapet, and let myself silently down to the roof of the platform, which was only some six feet below. I had just started to crawl cautiously along the roof, when a voice from the parapet called:

"'Ere, you! Wotcher doin' of?"

I shall never know how he managed to interrupt me. I think he must have been riding a bicycle without a light, or else had been watching me for some time from the shadows, as fascinated as any curious dog.

What to do? Take him into my confidence? Bluff? Climb back on to the road and knock him out?

"'Only getting a spot of free travel, mate," I said.

"Doin' the railway company, eh?" he asked with an aggressive sense of duty.

"It ain't the company any longer," I replied indignantly. "It's the State."

He thought that over.

"Ah, so it is," he said. "Well, good night!"

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He removed his head, and vanished as silently as he had appeared.

AFTER all this interference by the citizenry, my nerves were shattered. I crawled along that roof, trying hard to persuade myself that it was safer than any other place I had been in for the last six hours—which, oddly enough, and at a distance of twenty feet from the bridge, was true. When I came abreast of the rear end of the restaurant-car, I saw that there would be no difficulty in dropping on to its roof, so long as feet didn't slip on the sloping edge.

I returned to the bridge, crossed the road and the fence beyond, and disappeared into the waste ground. Lex and Sandorski were waiting where I had left them in the darkness of the coal trucks. The general didn't much care for my route when I explained it, and asked whether I thought that Lex was a bloody circus performer. Lex, however, had cheered up a little. He insisted that if all he had to do was drop, the law of gravity would take care of him.

We passed Lex over the fence, and made a wide circuit away from the railway so that our clumsy progress wouldn't be heard by anyone on the line. That journey was a violent strain on patience. Holes, bricks, strands of wire, rusty cans and drums, all camouflaged by tall dead weeds, tripped us while we supported the stumbling Lex. It seemed all of a mile before we came to the road.

I went first to show them where to cross the parapet of the bridge. A minute afterwards Lex sprawled over the edge into sight, with the general hanging on to his hands. I grabbed and landed him, and Sandorski followed. Once Lex had got his breath back, it seemed the right moment to stimulate him ; so we all had a stiff tot of rum.

Our crawl in single file along the roof was easy enough. We halted above the black whale-back of the restaurant car. I asked Lex if he thought that—with help—he could drop to it and keep his footing, and then quickly climb down to the couplings by the rungs at the rear of the car.

The rum worked.

"I have *militär* training," he said proudly.

We couldn't let him make an enthusiastic job of it then and there, because we did not know what was going on beneath us. The platform might be empty, or there might be a whole group of railwaymen discussing the next day's football. I leaned over the edge of the concrete while Sandorski sat on my legs. With the top half of my body upside down, I surveyed the station.

"All clear for you, general," I reported, wriggling back to the horizontal.

He dropped on to the roof of the car, and was off it again with first bounce. He could now keep watch on the platforms for us, and signal to me from the narrow space between the back of the car and the buffers at the end of the bay.

When he beckoned, I, too, dropped and told Lex to follow Strength or nerve failed him at the last moment, and he stuck with his chest on the edge of the concrete and his legs kicking wildly in air—just where I couldn't grab them without risk of falling off the

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top of the car myself. At that moment a porter chose to walk, whistling, round the corner of the station buildings. I caught Lex's legs as they lashed back, and prayed that he wouldn't let go his hold on the roof and that the porter wouldn't look up. For long seconds we formed a leaning, living bridge between restaurant car and roof until it was safe for me to whisper to him what to do and where to put his feet.

We dived under the car at last, and we didn't have a long wait. The second train in was for London—one of those slow and weightily important trains, usually empty, which stop everywhere to pick up the mails. I poked up a very cautious head. The platform was sparsely populated by porters and post office employees, and there was no convenient crowd of passengers alighting or boarding the train; it couldn't have been worse. And then a light engine came along, banged into the restaurant car, was coupled on, and prepared to draw our cover from over our heads.

IT was a moment of hopeless, helpless disappointment. We stood up in my look-out post—between the back of the van and the buffers—and waited to be revealed in all our guilty nakedness to the shunter and assistant stationmaster as soon as the van drew out. I don't know who first saw the way of escape. Even Lex didn't miss it, for he was trying to scramble up before I shoved him from behind. On the far side of the bay was a ledge, hardly wide enough to be called a platform. We had only to walk along that as the van pulled out, and nobody—provided neither driver nor fireman looked to their right—could see us.

It worked. We trotted along by the flank of that friendly van, and when we were clear of the bay we saw salvation. There was a goods train standing on the far side of the London train, which we couldn't get a glimpse of from where we had been. We had only to walk up the permanent way between the two trains and get in from the wrong side.

The doors were already shut, and the night mail might start at any moment. We were weary of precautions. We crossed the rails in a bunch. I don't know if anyone saw us. If he did, he must have been too tired to bother with trespassing passengers. Once between the two trains, the rest was simple. We settled Lex in a steaming-hot empty compartment, put his overcoat under his head, and went into another ourselves to breathe freely. Two minutes later the train left.

"Now," said Sandorski, "where's that needle and thread?"

LEX by this time had complete trust in us, and was convinced that the life we had led him for the last twenty-four hours was all for his own good. Every one of our actions was consistent with a desperate attempt to pass him through a cordon of police and private enemies, and deliver him to Heyne-Hassingham. Of course—for that was just what we were trying to do. He no longer worried about his brief-case; in any case, he could be sure it hadn't been

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tampered with, since it had not gone up in a burst of flame.

Sandorski undid our precious brown paper parcel. The bottom of the brief-case, relieved of string, gaped. The stuffing of paper fell out.

"Can you ever make a job of it?" I asked.

"Must," he answered. "And I made my own shoes in prison camp."

I think I never admired him so much as during that journey. I had no idea that he could be so meticulous. Every stitch that I had cut was lifted out, and with infinite care he drove his needle through the same holes. First he sewed the cardboard roll back to the inner side of the bag, leaving slack the wire between the latch and the incendiary, so that even when the device was set it wouldn't go off. Then he put back the loose paper and stitched up the seam. The only thing he could not put back exactly as we found it was the sealed tape that ran the length of the roll and round the two ends. We stuck the cut edges of the tape to the cardboard, and hoped that Heyne-Hassingham, in his general state of agitation, wouldn't notice. The trigger wire of the incendiary still ran through the tape, so it was pretty certain he would cut, withdraw his documents and never look at roll or tape again.

Lex had not seen his brief-case at all since he packed. He had only seen the parcel, which was beginning to look disreputable. We brushed the drying mud from our clothes, remixed it and smeared it artistically here and there over the case to hide the newness of the thread. Then we wrapped up the parcel again, and soaked the lower end in mud and water. When Lex handled it, the paper would certainly disintegrate and the dirt of the case would need no explanation.

While Sandorski was working on his long task I stood in the corridor, in case Lex should get up and disturb us. He didn't. He was only too thankful to be able to lie down in peace.

After Basingstoke, where the line from Salisbury joined that from Southampton, we were—potentially, at any rate—in danger again. I felt it was slight. To the police, after checking the likely trains, it must appear that we were still in or around Salisbury. It was certain, however, that there would be a routine control at Waterloo. I wanted to leave the train at one of the suburban stations, but Sandorski wouldn't have it; he feared that, as the only passengers getting out, we should attract attention.

Three-quarters of our job, he said, was now done. Lex had his brief-case and papers seemingly intact, and so long as he kept away from us there was nothing to prevent him leaving the terminus and taking a taxi to 26, Fulham Park Avenue. The police had no description of him. What happened to us didn't matter much, but it would be more comfortable and discreet to be arrested in Fulham Park Avenue than elsewhere.

We woke up Lex, who was feeling brighter, and Sandorski gave him his instructions in rapid German, which he translated to me afterwards. Early in the morning Lex was to telephone Heyne-

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Hassingham and tell him that he had escaped during some trouble or other at the landing of the 'plane, which looked like an attempt to kidnap him. He had got clear, had spent the day in a village, lying low and finding out where he was, and had then taken a late train to London. He was to obey his instructions to hand over his brief-case to Heyne-Hassingham in person, and he was to ask Heyne-Hassingham to come to London to receive it. He was not to talk of his adventures or to mention his address on the telephone, but simply to say he was where he had been told to go in any emergency.

The train pulled in to Waterloo. We pushed Lex out on to the platform, and said good-bye. Then we hid under the seats.

We stayed there for about twenty minutes while the train was trundled out, and banged back and forth in the yards. It stopped at one or two unpromising places, where we were in a blaze of lights and suspended above south London on arches. We didn't like the look of them, and remained. Then an army of cleaners swarmed over our train.

"Quick! Sleep!" Sandorski ordered.

He pulled the cork out of the rum, and dropped the bottle on the floor. We lay back snoring. A fearsome female, all dirt, muscles and overalls, poked us with the end of her broom.

"'Ere!" she exclaimed, "Look what 'appened to the drop you were tykin' 'ome for muvver!"

"Where are we?" I murmured, with a stage hiccup.

"On the bleedin' British Rylewyes," she said. "And don't think because you own 'em, you can myke 'em a bleedin' 'otel."

We staggered to our feet, and I'm damned if Sandorski didn't try to kiss her. That got him altogether too much goodwill, and if some kind of official hadn't come along I doubt if anything would have saved him from a fate worse than death right there in the compartment. The official was sternly humorous. He was evidently quite accustomed to finding bits of rubbish like ourselves routed out by cleaners from late trains. He collected our tickets, escorted us firmly to a gate and left us free in London.

IT was dark and cold and raining. Somewhere near Vauxhall Bridge we found a taxi, and told the driver to take us to Fulham Park Avenue and stop at the corner. He seemed to know what corner, so I left it at that. The empty, mournful streets were unending. I hoped the children were asleep. I knew Cecily wouldn't be.

"Now look here, colonel, my lad!" said Sandorski. "You leave it all to me. Not a word about Riemann! You've just been helping me. I picked you up on your shoot. Thought you were obviously a useful chap. We don't know anything about the corpse in the car. Leave him out altogether. Tell the rest as it happened."

No. 26 was an unassuming block of flats, three storeys high. No lift. No porter. Just the place for quiet comings and goings, with no questions asked. As we hesitated invitingly in front of the closed door, I thought I saw somebody in the wet and gleaming patch of

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If you have enjoyed *A Rough Shoot* as much as we have you will be delighted to hear that ARGOSY has secured first publication rights of its sequel, *A Time to Kill*. As vivid and swift-moving as *A Rough Shoot*, we consider this new novel outstanding. And once more you will be meeting Roger Taine, this time with a new ally whose identity will surprise you !

The first part of

A TIME TO KILL

by GEOFFREY HOUSEHOLD

in next month's ARGOSY, on sale June 8th

darkness across the road flash a torch quickly towards the roof of No. 26. Sandorski waited, confident in his friend's arrangements.

The front door opened quietly. " Well, Peter ? " whispered a voice. " Got here after all, by Jove ! "

" Anyone come in ? " Sandorski asked.

" Yes. He's up there."

" With parcel ? "

" With parcel."

" Then you won't have anything to do till morning. Take us where we can talk."

Two men came out of the house and closed the door behind them. We all walked away together. The chap next to Sandorski was slim and fair. In dark sweater and wind-breaker, with a disreputable hat, he looked much like my idea of an enterprising burglar. His walk and bearing, however, were free and casual. The man at my side—and very close to my side he was—had a conventional hat and overcoat. His face was heavy but intelligent—and, at the moment, remarkably expressionless. We walked to the police car, which was parked some distance away, in an embarrassing silence. When we got there, my companion asked me if I were Colonel Taine.

" Mr. Taine," I corrected him.

" I have a warrant for your arrest on a charge of murder of a person unknown—" and he gave me the details and the usual caution.

I don't mind saying that his neutral, even kindly voice moved me to a sheer panic such as I've never felt in all my life.

" You can take down any damn thing you please in evidence against us," interrupted Sandorski cheerfully. " Got a sharp pencil ? "

" Peter," the other man said to him with the utmost seriousness, " you do understand that if you have broken the law I can't help you, don't you ? "

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"Haven't even hit a policeman," Sandorski replied. "Get on with it! Where can we talk?"

"Why not my flat—if you've no objection, inspector?"

I think that perhaps this friend of Sandorski's—and now of mine—would prefer me not to give his name and address. So I will continue to call him Roland, and merely say that his flat was warm and welcome—especially when he had produced something to eat. The policeman was Inspector Haldon of Scotland Yard's Special Branch.

Sandorski told our story. He said that he had come to England on information received, and left it at that. He had run into me when exploring the shoot, and I had agreed to help him. We had found the beacons and intercepted the 'plane, and we knew nothing at all about the body in the car. Then he told them of the international connections of the People's Union, and that it was Robert Heyne-Hassingham and Hiart who had organized the illicit landing.

Roland was at first inclined to think that Sandorski was romanticizing. He said that nobody could be such a fool as to take the People's Union seriously, not even its founder; and he was horrified at the suggestion that Hiart, who was almost a colleague of his, could be implicated.

He appealed to Inspector Haldon, who grinned in answer.

"I must admit, sir," he said, "that Colonel Hiart—well, it *has* been suggested that he was rather too thick with some of his opposite numbers abroad. We keep an open mind, of course, but—"

"Good God, Haldon!" Roland exclaimed, really shocked. "Do you watch me too?"

"Fatherly, sir; fatherly," said the Inspector. "Now, general, I understand that you telephoned Mr. Roland last night to wire Flat 9 for sound in order that you could prove your innocence and Mr. Taine's. What are we going to hear?"

"You are going to hear that courier speak to Heyne-Hassingham, and I hope you're going to hear him hand over the documents."

Then Sandorski told him what the documents were.

"Now you see why we ran for it—ha? If Hiart had got his hands on that brief-case, soon have gone up in smoke, wouldn't it? And if the police had it first, he'd have sworn the papers were forged by a mad Pole. Crazy general. Brains removed for experiment in prison camp. Lands 'planes. Burns cars. And the passenger, so that he can't talk—ha? I'd have had a hard time proving it wasn't so. I may have, still. I'm not sure Heyne-Hassingham will come. He might send Hiart."

"He won't do that," said Roland. "Hiart's in hospital. Fractured his skull when his car tipped over."

"Now this is all very well, sir," said the inspector genially. "But what we want to know is if General Sandorski can throw any light at all on that burned body."

"I? Didn't know a thing about it, till the cops called on Taine."

"Or you, Mr. Taine?"

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"No," I said, "no . . . no."

"Would it surprise you to know that the man had been dead some weeks before he was burned?"

"It would delight me," said Sandorski. "Here's my passport! You can see I wasn't in England."

"And Mr. Taine?"

"It's only a week since I met the general," I replied, as if that fixed it.

Well, of course it did. My life was an open book. Haldon must have been wholly content that I had no conceivable motive to go around murdering strangers until Sandorski turned up.

Roland let us doss down in his flat, while he and Haldon returned to duty at 26, Fulham Park Avenue. The inspector didn't exactly put us on parole, but he did warn us that he had a man outside, and that we couldn't avoid publicity and a magistrates' court if we tried to escape. As soon as they had gone, I tried to call Cecily. Only after sweating with fury did I remember that twelve hours before Sandorski had cut the line.

I thought that our excitement and exhaustion were too insistent for sleep, but some time after dawn we must both have dozed off, for we were awakened by Roland returning with the news that it was eleven o'clock and that he had a transcript of the telephone conversation between Lex and Heyne-Hassingham.

Lex had done very well. He had a fine Central European obstinacy. The butler tried to put him off. He kept on ringing, and attracted the private secretary. At last he got on to the great leader himself. Heyne-Hassingham had been very cagey and incredulous, but Lex started to give him the exact details of when he had been sent and by whom. Heyne-Hassingham exploded:

"Good God, Riemann!"

Roland looked at us for an explanation, but both Sandorski and I were blank—I fear, suspiciously blank. Of course, Heyne-Hassingham had believed the corpse in the car to be Lex, and he now saw that it must be the vanished Riemann.

After that he wanted Lex to come down to his house in Dorset, but Lex wasn't having any. He thought London was much safer—and I'm not surprised. So, on second thoughts, did Heyne-Hassingham. He had promised to drive up to town immediately.

Roland packed us into the back of his car, with a very formidable character sitting between us. A former commando sergeant-major, I should think. It was clear that we were by no means trusted yet.

BEFORE we turned into Fulham Park Avenue we were stopped by one of Haldon's men, who told us that half an hour after the conversation between Lex and Heyne-Hassingham two chaps had turned up in the street and were hanging about; one of them was known to be the Fulham secretary of the People's Union. It was a sure bet that they were going to report to the revered leader, when his car stopped at the corner, whether anyone suspicious had gone into No. 26.

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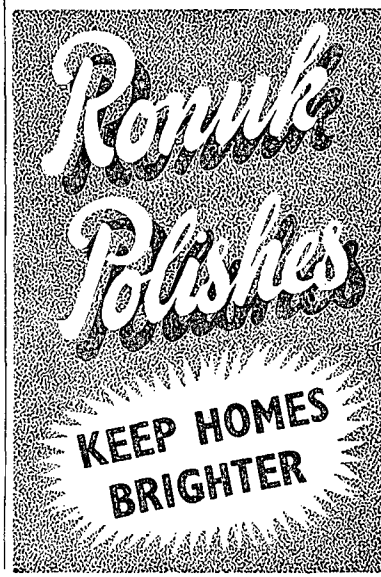

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That didn't bother Roland. I gathered that the Metropolitan Police by no means always used the front door of a house that interested them. At No. 38 there was a friendly porter, bursting with importance and carefully looking the other way when we passed him. From a skylight in his building we gained access to the roofs of the long, narrow block, and walked along the leads, between the sloping slates and the parapet, to No. 26. We had to climb the party walls, with their projecting chimney stacks, but were hidden from Fulham Park Avenue itself by the gables. We were, of course, in full view of windows of the opposite block, beyond the yards and gardens. Londoners, however, have a remarkable lack of curiosity.

Haldon and a police stenographer were squatting in the shelter of a water tank. We waited with them for some ninety minutes of cold politeness. Then the front door bell of Flat 9 spat a startling ring at us from the receiver, and we settled down to listen.

The door opened and shut. Lex took control of the interview from the start, for he insisted stolidly upon Heyne-Hassingham proving his identity. When his legal mind was satisfied, and Heyne-Hassingham—by his voice—dancing with impatience, Lex said:

"Here is vot I bring for you! I push—so!—and we may open. If I not push, all burn!"

"Very ingenious," agreed Heyne-Hassingham coldly and hurriedly.

He was a frightened man. His hoarse tone was enough for Haldon to give me a confident wink. It was the first friendly gesture that the inspector had permitted himself.

They must have been very close to the microphone, for we actually heard the key turn in the lock of the brief-case, and then a rustle of papers, overwhelmingly loud, as Heyne-Hassingham withdrew the roll of documents and glanced at the contents.

He pulled himself together and thanked Lex for his devoted service in words that would better have fitted the Archbishop of Canterbury than a damned idealistic crook of a politician.

"I did little," Lex answered. "But soch gallantry, soch bravery I have seen! I vant you now to hear—"

"I will, my dear chap, I will indeed," Heyne-Hassingham interrupted. "But later, if you don't mind. I must get you out of England at once. You'll have your orders in an hour or two."

Haldon jumped for the skylight of No. 26, intending to pick up Heyne-Hassingham outside the door of the flat before he could get rid of his papers.

"Don't touch Lex!" Sandorski shouted. "And don't take Heyne-Hassingham past the windows. It's a gift!"

Roland saw what he meant at once. If Lex stayed in the flat and knew nothing of Heyne-Hassingham's arrest, and if Sandorski then smuggled him abroad, it would be proved up to the hilt that the general was indeed Heyne-Hassingham's trusted agent, and for a few days all Lex's contacts would be wide open to inspection.

Heyne-Hassingham's head and shoulders appeared at the skylight, with Haldon a close two rungs of the ladder below him. For a

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moment the great leader looked his part. Worry and terror and self-control had given him the ascetic face of a saint.

He took two fairly confident steps towards the water tank. Then he saw me, knew that he was trapped, and had, I suppose, no thought but how to get rid of his papers. He lost his nerve, jumped the low party wall on to the leads of the next house and bolted. It wasn't as crazy an act as it seemed. If he could get a lead of a few seconds and drop that roll of documents down a smoking chimney-pot, he could afford to stand on his dignity afterwards.

Sandorski went away after him well ahead of the rest of us. His featherweight build was just right for this gymnasium stuff. He could hop over the slates like a London sparrow. Heyne-Hassingham just managed to keep away from him for the length of half a dozen houses, and then, when the general was nearly on him, jumped on to the parapet overlooking Fulham Park Avenue. I don't know what he meant to do. His position was by no means desperate enough for suicide. But he was unbalanced in more senses than one, and it was Sandorski's grab for him that was decisive. I was the only person who saw what happened. Sandorski was, perhaps, a little clumsy. It was as well, for I doubt if Haldon could ever have got a conviction for high treason against a competent defence.

The punishment, however, was correct. Heyne-Hassingham fell on the area railings beneath, and a spike took him under the chin. When we got down to the street, we couldn't see much of his sprawling body, but his head looked at us as if from the top of Temple Bar. A mean and suburban Temple Bar—that was about what Heyne-Hassingham was worth.

At Scotland Yard Haldon took me first, and alone. I didn't have any difficulty. I told the whole truth and nothing but the truth, but I started it with the appearance of Sandorski on my shoot. I had merely to appear a bit of a romantic fool, showing myself far too easily convinced by Sandorski's story.

"Somewhat irresponsible for a married man with children, isn't it?" asked Haldon.

"Oh, well," I replied weakly, "one wants to escape from time to time, you know."

"You'd better tell that to Mrs. Taine," he said, with a dryness that suggested he wasn't wholly satisfied.

He pressed a bell on his desk. There was a moment of awkward silence. Then the door opened, and in came Cecily.

Damn Haldon! I couldn't help it. I seemed to have been away from her for a year.

"Who's looking after the children?" I asked.

"I told the police they had to come with me," she said. "There's a sergeant out there, playing with them. They wanted to see how handcuffs worked."

She stifled a sob and looked at us both, very still, but not white. She forced herself to appear natural and proud. I don't know how she did it.

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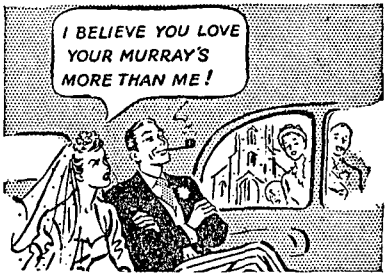

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"Mrs. Taine," said Haldon. "There is just one point I want cleared up. You stated to the Dorset police that you were absolutely certain that no-one had ever been hidden in your house. Would you care to amend that?"

"No," she answered. "No-one was ever hidden in my house."

I could have believed her myself. I said:

"It's all right, darling. Tell him the truth."

"That's very wrong of you, inspector," she complained hotly. "How was I to know? Of course there were two of them in the roof, General Sandorski and a man they called Lex."

"I see," he answered with a heavy neutrality. "Mrs. Taine, when did you first know that your husband was engaged in these activities?"

That was a vilely clever question. I stayed frozen, for Haldon was watching both our faces. If she answered that she had known for three weeks, I was done.

"What activities?" she asked.

"Assisting the police."

"Oh, when he brought General Sandorski home the first time," she replied, straight off the bat.

"Thank you, Mrs. Taine. I should say, perhaps, that my report from the Dorset police"—was there a shade of irony in his voice?—"states that you gave an impression of absolute honesty and innocence."

"Didn't I?" I asked.

"You were rather too pleased with your acting, Mr. Taine," he replied, and added mysteriously: "It's a fault Mr. Roland will doubtless take in hand. We don't want to lose people like you, you know."

He let Cecily go, telling her that he would only detain me another minute. Then he joined me on the public side of his desk, and produced a decanter of whisky.

"We're allowed a good deal of liberty at the Special Branch," he said.

I answered that I had noticed it. He had tidied up Fulham Park Avenue with remarkable speed.

"Heyne-Hassingham was a prominent man," he went on, "and I think I shall be permitted to make the inquest as uncomplicated as possible. No Lex. No Sandorski. Just a combination of a routine police enquiry and overwork. That will give us time to throw the net a little wider. But there is just one thing bothering me, and I daren't leave it hanging about unsolved in the background. That corpse in the car. If you can, let me have a statement for the files—completely off the record, as a little bit of fiction, perhaps—just so that I know what happened."

★*The first part of "A Time to Kill," the great sequel to this story, will appear in next month's ARGOSY. To make sure of your copy, why not place a regular order with your newsagent?*

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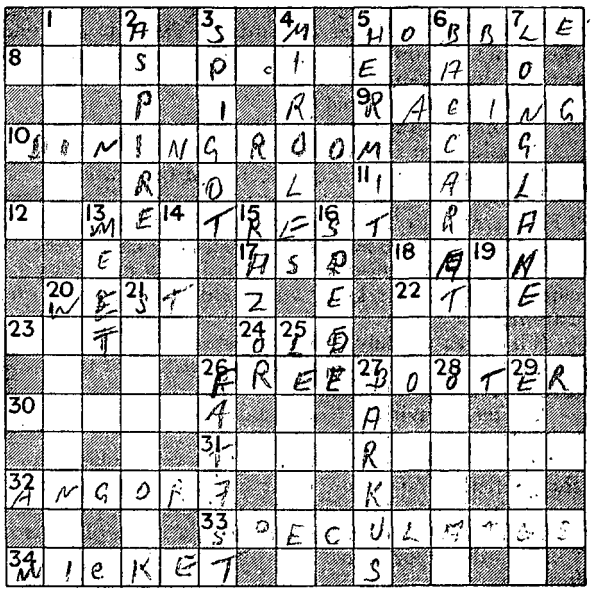
Solution on page 119



CLUES

Across

5 Hardly the skirt for skating (6).

8 Every second person fails to get it (5, 5).

9 Sport for a horse or its own reversed head (6).

10 Setting for 31 across (6, 4).

11 Delia's aspirations (6).

12 Where Bacchus holds court ? (4, 6).

17 Snake in the grasp (3).

18 Asinine ! Including the river (5).

20 Just a description of a blonde (4).

22 This may arise from some dammed little brook (4).

23 This will solve nothing; not even crosswords ! (5).

24 "And beauty, making beautiful —— rhyme." Shakespeare (3).

26 A campaigner for State-aided footwear? (10).

30 Go south-east and reach the river, rather the worse for wear (6).

31 Hospitality extended to one's former host ? (6, 4).

32 Appropriate fabric to wear with a goatee ! (6).

33 The oculist's account (10).

34 Where cricketers take the stand ? (6).

Down

1 The home of Dante's Francesca (6).

2 Yearn for a steeple ? (6).

3 This pig's not in a poke; more likely to be in a barrel (6).

4 Miles around the outskirts of this French town ! (7).

5 He might be a crab with solitary tastes (6).

6 I visit a cabaret, submicroscopically (8).

7 Not a short way from a proverb (4, 4).

13 "East is East . . ." but this part is less remote (4).

14 The lively part of the osprey (4).

15 Sharp edge for Somerset Maugham (5).

16 There's nothing in the stormy deep for this lyric poem (5).

18 High relief for the singer ? (4).

19 I abandon my Maori charms for satire (4).

20 Leading doctor among the trees (8).

21 Angry about dress; better supply some helpful liquid (8).

25 In journeys of miles it saves feet (7).

26 Rummage for the rodent (6).

27 His bark is worse than his bite; but he's willing (6).

28 In the vicinity of Fingal's Cave (6).

29 "Our —— from the world, Will be nobody knows where" (Longfellow) (6).

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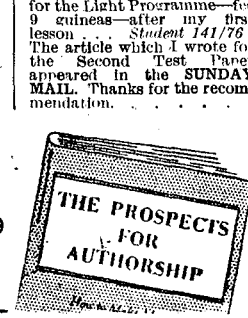
PRACTICAL RESULTS

Student 357/3015: I have had my story accepted by **BLACKWOODS** who are paying me £25 for it . . . *Student 778/2119:* I thought it might interest you to know that **THE COUNTRYMAN** has accepted a short article of mine on an old country custom . . . *Student 184/315:* As you suggested, I submitted the articles to the **NEW STATESMAN.** One was published on the 17th July. I have also had an article accepted by **MEN ONLY** . . . *Student 181/282:* You may be interested to hear that I had a letter from the Editor of **ARGOSY**; they have offered me Twenty-five Guineas for my story . . . *Student 591/287:* You will be pleased that my article submitted for my Second Lesson was published in the **DAILY MIRROR** and I received Six Guineas for it . . . *Student 120/288:* I have established contact with the Editor of **PUNCH.** The item was accepted for "Charivaria" and is a good start . . . *Student 1179/347:* I succeeded in getting four Big Game stories into **COURIER** and another about "Shrove Tuesday." Another article appeared in the August issue of **BLACKWOODS** . . . *Student 1954/157:* I have just corrected a proof of my story for **WIDE WORLD**; they have since accepted another and I have sent in a third . . . *Student 171/162:* I have sold my story to **EVERYWOMAN** for 25 guineas . . . *Student 1106/156:* The **B.B.C.** accepted the script for the Light Programme—fee 9 guineas—after my first lesson . . . *Student 141/76:* The article which I wrote for the Second Test Paper appeared in the **SUNDAY MAIL.** Thanks for the recommendation. . . . . .



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